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## CONTENTS

Editorial	97
<i>Heiner Becker</i> Johann Neve (1844-1896)	99
<i>Colin Ward</i> Self-Help in Urban Renewal	115
<i>David Koven</i> Walden Center and School	121
<i>Franklin Rosemont</i> Surrealism in England; Heads or Tails?	142
<i>Arthur Moyse</i> Surrealism in England: What about Jesus?	147
<i>Geoffrey Ostergaard</i> Indian Anarchism: The Case of Vinoba Bhave	150
<i>Nicolas Walter</i> Woodcock Reconsidered	173
Review: <i>Denis Pym</i> on Lewis Mumford, <i>The Future of Technics and Civilization</i>	185
<i>George Woodcock</i> on Benjamin Tucker and the Champions of 'Liberty'	190

*Illustrations between pages 129 and 136 and pages 153 and 160*

### THE RAVEN

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## Editorial

The Raven's comparatively slow and pompous way of walking has often amused lesser-informed observers and been the object of caricature and ridicule. Few phenomena in nature, however, are without a reason, and it may therefore be noted that intelligent activity does not always coincide with fast and elegant movements. We are living in the age of the motor car, and the Raven, which was once known to populate gallows (earning him the name of 'gallows bird') and was for a while nearly extinct in many places, has now made his refuge alongside motorways. Observers of these fashionable lines on the face of the earth can all the time, sadly enough, perceive the death — or execution, one might call it — of thousands and thousands of fast and elegantly moving animals there. But they may also note that of all the countless numbers of Ravens to be seen living on the spoils of motorised modern civilisation, none falls victim to it. The Raven, in all his pompous slowness, seems to have come to better terms with the otherwise uncontrollable speed of the motorised individual. This has made puzzled and amused ornithologists call the Raven the most cunning user of roads and motorways.

We had quite a few reactions to our belated first issue, some very flattering, all encouraging. A few friends, however, not entirely surprisingly, found it 'rather top-heavy with historical material'. Much could be said in return. It might be mentioned that, though primarily historians ourselves, we are not entirely happy with the fact that the great bulk of good contributions received so far could be qualified as 'historical'. But, then, what is 'historical' for anarchists? Where does 'history' begin or end for them? Is David Koven's article on Walden Center and School 'historical' or 'educational', or both? If anarchism has to do with and to find its justification essentially in human experience, does the mere chronological factor really matter much — or, if so, to what extent? Our friendly critics' answer should be, of course, that John Neve was arrested exactly a century ago. His fate, the destruction of a movement and also of many lives, through intolerance, hypocrisy, incompetence, and personal vanity is 'historical' and a phenomenon of the nineteenth century. Anarchists, of course, make mistakes only once — in order to learn from them, presumably

instinctively, or by some other inexplicable means. For us, the argument runs, there is no need for 'historical' knowledge, which would probably be used only to cover up, as we know from the Marxists and many other examples. Or, to put it differently, anarchists don't need mirrors to shave. (Perhaps this is why many anarchists don't shave.)

Some of the topics dealt with in this issue will be complemented and further elaborated in the next. David Koven's article will be followed, we hope, by Tony Gibson's account of his experiences of Burgess Hill School in Britain. Franklin Rosemont wrote on the English Surrealist experiment originally for a small French Surrealist publication. We use his article here to induce some of those friends mentioned in it or originally involved to comment on it. Arthur Moyse's contribution is one of the first results. Others will be published in the next issue. The reactions to the photographic insert were without exception positive or even enthusiastic, and for the chance of this time giving double the space for illustrations we thank Mary Switkes of Lafayette, California, and David Koven himself for the Walden pictures.

Certainly we do not mind praise; but we positively ask our readers to let us have their criticisms too. The Raven's thanks will be generous — in the form of invitations to do better, and write for it.

## Heiner Becker

### Johann Neve (1844-1896)

'It is now some seven years since Socialism came to life again in this country', wrote William Morris in *The Commonweal* on 15 November 1890, not excessively modestly resuming the development and progress made since he joined the (Social) Democratic Federation. 'Those who set out "to make the revolution"...were a few working-men, less successful even in the wretched life of labour than their fellows; a sprinkling of the intellectual proletariat, whose keen pushing of Socialism must have seemed pretty certain to extinguish their limited chances of prosperity; one or two outsiders in the game political; a few refugees from the bureaucratic tyranny of foreign governments...'

Most of these 'few working-men and refugees' were linked, in one way or another, to an institution commonly referred to as the 'Rose Street Club' after the street where the club had its premises. Some of its more official names were Social Democratic Working Men's or simply Social Democratic Club, International Club, or Communist Workingmen's Educational Club. Since the early 1830s there had been a long tradition of foreign workingmen's clubs in London, mostly founded by political refugees. Most of them, however, had remained confined to their respective national communities: French and German, Scandinavian, Dutch, Slavonic and Italian clubs and associations flowered at one time or another. Prominent among these both in numbers of members and duration, but also in as far as from time to time more or less close contacts with advanced English political movements are concerned, were some of the French and German establishments. Clearly the most important was the one which Karl Schapper and six German and French friends started as an International Club on 7 February 1840. Its name changed often, or rather, it was usually and throughout its existence (until the early 1920s actually) referred to at the same time by several approximate or descriptive names. The best known, however, is Communistischer Arbeiter-Bildungs-Verein (CABV; Communist Workers' Educational Society), which was used from about 1850.

From the beginning its members cooperated closely with the French Democratic Society (*Société Démocratique Française*), and soon also with leading left Chartists, which led in Autumn 1844 to the formation

of the shortlived Democratic Friends of All Nations, the first initiative to create some sort of workers International, and then in August/September 1845 to the foundation of the Fraternal Democrats. Some of the English Chartists became (and remained all their lives) members of the club, like Ernest Jones (and similarly some of its German members were to play more or less important roles in the English Socialist or Trade Union movement, like Adam Weiler who is credited by Stan Shipley (following the Webbs) 'with responsibility for the "first sign" of the "new spirit" of socialism at the T.U.C.'). Its most prominent members were, of course, Marx and Engels, and the club was responsible for the printing of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in 1848 (in the March of which year, incidentally, the club was also closed for the first time by the English police). It was involved in the establishment of the International Association (1855-1859), and in January 1865 joined the International Working Men's Association (the First International).

As may be expected, there were a number of splits following all sorts of quarrels, as for example between 'Lassalleans' and followers of Marx in the first half of the 1870s. Rival groups then ran their 'clubs' under the same name, occasionally distinguished by the reference to the IWMA. These splits usually occurred towards the end of periods of high activity — as after 1848, or in 1870/71. During the major part of the 1870s, none of the rivalling groups claiming to continue the great revolutionary tradition counted more than a dozen or perhaps some twenty members, and an effort was seldom made to change this pattern and to attract more members or to spread actively socialism. None of the rival groups had their own clubhouse; their meeting-places were pubs, like the Blue Post in Newman Street, Oxford Street; or the Graven's Arms, at 38 Marshall Street, Golden Square. Around 1875, following the influx of a few more determined and energetic members, efforts were made to return to political work proper and to overcome the continuous in-fighting, intriguing and quarrelling between rival factions. But it did not come to more than a few well-attended meetings, usually organised in cooperation with some French exiles and the Patriotic Club. The situation really changed only towards the end of 1877, partly because of the arrival in September of Franz Josef Ehrhart (1855-1908), a very energetic young German Social Democrat who had started his political career a few years earlier in the Palatinate largely inspired and 'set on course' by Johann Most.

Shortly before, Summer 1877, some other Germans, tired of all the quarrels in the CABV, had initiated a separate club very much on the same lines as the original CABV, as an International Club. A first meeting was held on 3 August 1877, at the Spread Eagle, Charles

Street, near Middlesex Hospital, when Frank Kitz moved and Eugen Mendel seconded that 'Seeing the necessity which exists for a club composed of the Social Democrats of London, not only as a means of for social enjoyment, but also as a method for propagating the principles of Social and Political Reform,...immediate steps should be taken to organise for the formation of such a club' (*West Central News*, 25 August 1877). As Kitz tells, 'the initiative has been taken by the foreign friends of progress who are resident in the [West Central] district, and who are desirous of securing the co-operation of English Radicals' (*Secularist Review & Secularist*, 2 October 1877). The English section was formed, 'mainly at the instigation of Neve', a little later, in November 1877. The driving forces behind this were, apart from Neve, Eugen Mendel and Louis Weber, and on the English side Frank Kitz and Charles Murray, the old Chartist, soon to be joined by William Townshend of Chartist and International fame, John Lord, Burwood Plant, R.D. Butler and others.

Eugen Mendel, who was to play a very active role in the socialist movement for some ten years, ran at this time the Café Vorwaerts at 52 Pentonville Road, near the Angel, until he became steward of the Rose Street Club and, after being expelled for 'financial irregularities', moved to the East End where he then was active for a while. Louis Weber, the son of the old German Forty-Eighter from the Palatinate, Joseph Valentin Weber (both had been opponents of Marx since the 1850s and during the First International), was a watchmaker and for some thirty years one of Kitz's closest friends.

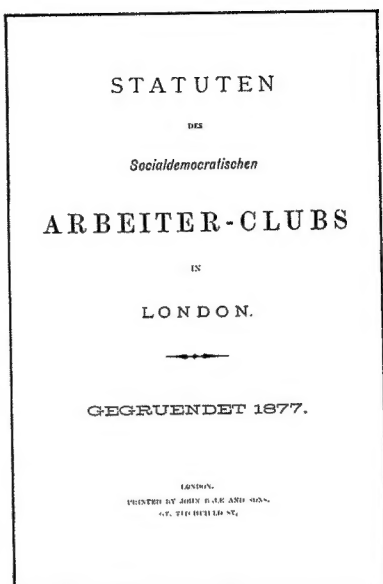
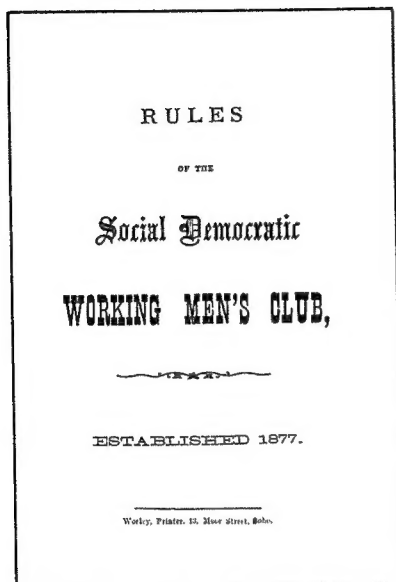
Johann Christoph Neve (who always was the most 'discreet' of them all, although — or because? — he was the most energetic and consistent one) was born on 12 April 1844 at Uelvesbuell near Eiderstadt, in the duchy of Schleswig, then still belonging to Denmark. Apprenticed to his father Juergen Neve, a joiner, he left home in 1863 and a year later came to London, where he stayed for a couple of years. In 1866 he moved to Paris and in 1868 to the United States. Apart from a short return to Europe, he remained there until 1874 when he came back to London. The next three years he spent mostly in London and Paris, it seems, until in Summer 1877 with the establishment of the Social Democratic Club he appears to have become firmly settled in London, and for the next ten years, until arrested and jailed for the rest of his life, he was regarded as one of the most reliable and trustworthy men in the movement, avoiding the limelight, but one way or another involved in or behind all initiatives during this time worth mentioning.

The initiative of the establishment of the Social Democratic Club coincided with one of the great strikes of the period, the stonemasons' strike that started during the construction of the new Law Courts in the

Strand from July 1877 to March 1878. The employers started to import 'foreign labour', mainly from Germany. This seems eventually to have added credibility to some of the foreign socialists and their efforts to increase cooperation with English workers. The Social Democratic Club (International and English Sections), meeting regularly at the Grafton Arms, Grafton Street (now Grafton Way), Fitzroy Square, found more response and its meetings were better attended every week. Some form of cooperation with the CABV was soon established, and one of the fruits of this was the founding of the Universal Federal Workmen's League (UFWL) on 21 November 1877, at the Blue Post, Newman Street, Oxford Street. Its first aim was meant to be the 'United action of the workers of all countries in the struggle against the oppression by the internationally organised Capital'. Although it was to lead a shadowy existence, apart from the first few months, for some years, its achievements did not amount to much more than a mention in Warren J. Davis' *History of the Trade Union Congress* under the heading 'How the International Trades Congress was first introduced'. (It should not be confused with another effort to re-establish the International, the International Labour Union, established also in November 1877 at the Occidental Rooms, Fountain Court, The Temple. This was started mainly by old members of the First International like John Hales, George Eccarius, John Weston, Isaac Salomon Van der Hout, Harriet Law, Hermann Jung, and others, and Secularists like Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, and seems to have been regarded with some suspicion by the more 'down to earth' workers and socialists we are concerned with here.) In the first and still somewhat active months of the UFWL we find among its officers Eugen Mendel as secretary for Germany, Solomon F. Kaufmann for France, Louis Weber for America, and R.D. Butler for England and as general secretary, all of whom were to play very active roles in the Rose Street Club and the milieu that eventually led to the formation of the Democratic Federation.

John Neve usually stayed in the background — his name appears in contemporary printed material only if nobody else could be found to give his name, or as a participant in meetings when his name is mentioned without further particulars. Motions originating with him were usually put forward by others (like Kitz). One of the results of his organising work in the background was the stonemasons' deputation to South Germany (where most of his blacklegs were recruited) in December 1877, consisting of Franz Josef Ehrhart, Louis Weber, and John Bradder(?). These efforts met with some success, as did the agitation among the German workers already working on the Law Courts. This was the origin also of the close cooperation between the





Social Democratic Club in Grafton Street and the CABV in Marshall Street which eventually led to the merging of the two. In January and February 1878 both clubs approached the International Labour Union, to inquire about the possibility of 'coalescing and working together...and act in unison' — but Neve and Busch, who on 5 February 1878 represented the Grafton Street Club at a meeting of the ILU, were obviously not satisfied with what they found there, and nothing came of it.

The 'desire to see the establishment of a meeting place distinct from the public houses, and which shall be available as a means of social recreation and Democratic propaganda' was expressed from the beginning by the founders and members of the Grafton Street club, and it was tried to raise the necessary funds by issuing 5s shares. The CABV, mainly at the instigation of Ehrhart, soon said the same, but as the amount raised by the individual groups was not sufficient, even if combined, the occasion to restore a nearly derelict house in 6 Rose Street, Soho Square, was eagerly taken up. The building (which had previously housed the St James and Soho Working Men's Club) was rebuilt and redecorated from February 1878 onwards, and was inaugurated as a permanent meeting-place for all the International and English sections of the Grafton Street club and the CABV on 3 August 1878 (and was to serve as such until April 1882).

In March 1878, Neve organised with Franz Josef Ehrhart and Frank Kitz a great memorial meeting for the Paris Commune (on 20 March, two days later than the meeting organised by the French refugees). And, with growing success in the West End, activities were immediately spread also further: on 26 March the CABV established a second section in the East End in a surprisingly well attended public meeting chaired by Louis Weber and addressed by Franz Josef Ehrhart, Gustav May and Charles A. Zadeck (who also became the Section's first secretary).

Ehrhart, who had become secretary of the CABV a fortnight after his arrival in September 1877 (which says enough about the state the club was in then), could say in his annual report in October 1878 that the German section of the (now united with the Grafton Street group) club had 255 members at the end of September, a fact that was also attributed to the new clubhouse. At this moment he resigned as secretary and, with John Neve, threw all his efforts into organising the growing number of German socialists fleeing from Germany shortly before and after the Anti-Socialist Laws had been imposed on the country by Bismarck.

There had been plans since late Summer of 1878 to publish a socialist paper from London destined mainly for the German workers, to counteract the growing repression of Social Democratic papers in Germany. When Johann Most arrived in London at Christmas, he was convinced by Ehrhart and Neve to take the editorship, and the first number of *Freiheit* was published on 4 January 1879. It opened with an explanation and appeal signed by the 'Press Committee', of whose seven members five had also been founding members of the Grafton Street club: Franz Josef Ehrhart, Wilhelm Hoffmann, G.C. Uhly, Louis Weber, and, of course, Johann Neve.

The office was first in the same building as the club in 6 Rose Street, then at 22 Percy Street, Tottenham Court Road, from 18 October 1879 to 31 December 1880 and again from January until May 1882, when *Freiheit* was virtually suppressed in England. From January to the end of April 1881 it was at 101 Great Titchfield Street, Oxford Street, from May to September 1881 at 252 Tottenham Court Road, and from October to the end of December 1881 at 66 Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square. It was run by Ehrhart and Neve, and when Ehrhart left London at the end of March 1879 it was Neve who took over the job alone (though his name appears only from 2 August 1879 on the masthead of the paper).

All this was, as Max Nettlau remarks in his obituary of Neve in *Freedom*, 'no mere routine work, as the *Freiheit* was the most eagerly hunted counterband in Germany and Austria, and any amount of skill

and pluck was required to invent everchanging devices for sending it over the frontiers'. At this time already he was the most highly regarded member of the club both in German and English socialist circles. In many ways he seems to have resembled Joseph Lane, both spiritually and physically (Max Nettlau, who had never met him, but who knew Lane well between 1885 and 1913, later erroneously identified a photograph of Neve as that of Lane, of whom otherwise no photograph is known). Kitz, who was by no means given to sentimentality, left in his obituary of Neve in *Freedom* an emotional description of him also for those, 'who now prate about what they did in the "early days of the Socialist movement" and "the heartbreaking struggles" they underwent':

Of medium height, fair and robust, with a genial frank countenance, quiet and unobtrusive, neither an orator nor writer, yet possessed of a certain power of inspiring in others confidence and enthusiasm which made him the life and soul of the German movement in London. Tender-hearted and generous, the sight of misery and oppression stirred within him both pity and hatred: pity for the victims and hatred of the oppressors. Earning high wages as a highly-skilled workman, he lived abstemiously that he might devote the bulk of his earnings to the furtherance of Socialism. Working at his trade by day, he gave up his nights to the movement; depriving himself of rest until his health broke down under the strain.

Our enemies are in the habit of depicting the Anarchist as a monster whose hand is against everyone's. Neve was a kindhearted workman who dedicated his life to the service of the workers; and who, moreover, up to a certain period, believed that their emancipation could be achieved by legislative methods.

One of the ideas Neve is said to have had for smuggling *Freiheit* into Austria was to roll hundreds of copies (printed on very thin 'Bible' paper) into the hollow space of bamboo canes, thereby provoking the headline in the papers after it had become known: 'Previously governments used to treat insubordinate citizens with the cane — now they are treated the same way by the Socialists'. Or, as each paper had to be prohibited for each title it used, to take the names of members of the government or well-known police officials for titles of the German edition of *Freiheit*. So every week all club members waited for the news: "Bismarck" has been prohibited!"; or: "Von Madai" (president of the Berlin police) has been forbidden — we deliver the aforesaid for the price of 1½d. as previously the prohibited Bismarck.'

A few English publications were the result of the Anglo-German cooperation in and around the Rose Street Club which Neve was particularly interested to encourage, the first one of which was James Sketchley's *The Principles of Social Democracy: An Exposition and a Vindication*, published by the Social Democratic Party, 6 Rose Street, Greek Street, Soho, in February 1879. (Sketchley, an old Chartist at

Birmingham, was until 1884 also one of the very few paid contributors to *Freiheit*, both under his name and the pseudonym 'Spartacus').

Many dozens of the leading articles of *Freiheit* were reproduced as leaflets for secret distribution in Germany and Austria, and on most of these from mid-1879 on Neve's name figures at the bottom. Reports of meetings of the time mention rarely more than just his name — he avoided speaking in public; one of the few exceptions is the great meeting held on Wednesday, 23 March 1881, in Grafton Hall, 55 Grafton Street (where later the CABV was housed) 'to commemorate the Revolution of 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1871, and to celebrate the execution of Alexander Romanov, vulgo Czar of Russia'. Neve was (with 'Citizen Duggan') one of the two chairmen. Under 'a red flag hung from the Gallery over the platform...Citizen Neve congratulated the meeting on the brotherhood of English, French and German Socialists, and spoke in justification of the assassination of the Emperor of Russia'.

Citizen Murray, representing English Social Democrats...with a view to the consolidation of the militant forces of the working classes, commended to those classes the English International Association...he stigmatised the military system of Europe as the plunder and murder of the human race, and scoffed at the horror which those who approved of such a system pretended to feel at the assassination of a tyrant who had caused the death of thousands....Mr. Ketts [Kitz], an Englishman, said he did not believe in violent death for any man, but any working man who joined in the lamentation about the Czar was a traitor to his own class.

And finally, in his last speech before his arrest and imprisonment for sixteen months for welcoming the Tsar's assassination in a front-page article in *Freiheit*, Most 'proposed a resolution expressing satisfaction that the Czar, one of the most cruel of tyrants, had been killed, hoping that the Russian social revolutionists would go on in the same way, and commending the example of Russia to the revolutionary party in other countries where there was such despotism'.

Most was arrested shortly afterwards, on Monday, 28 March 1881, and Neve immediately organised with Kitz a *Freiheit* Defence Committee, and became one of its secretaries, but typically as soon as this was running left the honour of publicity to others and was content to deal with the correspondence. During Most's imprisonment, Neve became responsible editor of *Freiheit*, and apart from this and the work related to the Defence Committee also took over Most's part in the organisation of the Social Revolutionary Congress planned to be held in London from 14 July, 1881 onwards. The congress was held in the backroom of the Fitzroy Arms, Cardington Street, Hampstead Road (and not a pub in Charrington Road, as is usually said) where the social revolutionary Slavonic Society used to meet, after the owner of the Blue

Post in Newman Street had withdrawn from his previously agreed contract.

Neve was present as delegate of the 'Section New York of the Socialistic Labor Party' and of the CABV in Rose Street, and was elected with Kropotkin and Merlino to the committee for the examination of the mandates. He soon grew impatient with the proceedings of the congress ('too much talk and too little serious work') and didn't take much part in it. He was nevertheless elected on to the International Committee (with Malatesta, Chaikovski and Sebastian Trunk) set up by the congress to maintain international relations. Not very much came of it, except a few addresses published as leaflets and the somewhat weak justification for the occasionally necessary reference to an International Association.

On 6 May 1882, the day he had taken the oath as chief secretary to the lord-lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish was assassinated with his under-secretary Thomas Henry Burke in Phoenix Park in Dublin. *Freiheit* published on 13 May an unsigned article 'Der Rebellen Antwort' ('The Reply of the Rebels', written by Karl Schneidt, a German journalist and social revolutionary at that time living in London). The issue, usually headed by the slogan 'Comrades! Don't Forget the Leaflet Fund!', was now headed: 'Against Tyrants ALL Things are Lawful!' On 16 May the *Freiheit* office was raided and the compositor working on it, Wilhelm Merten, was arrested. The next issue appeared still with the same heading, but half empty, the rest filled by 'Confiscated by the English Government' in large letters. Still another compositor was arrested then, Friedrich Schwelm, and Merten and Schwelm were eventually sentenced to three and sixteen months respectively for 'having unlawfully printed and published...in a certain paper called the *Freiheit*, a scandalous, wicked, and seditious libel of and concerning the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Thomas Burke'.

Neve, however, whom the police were particularly eager to arrest, was luckier: his landlady, seeing the police arriving, warned him in time and he managed to escape. His name on *Freiheit* was replaced by that of Trunk, and he hid for a while with friends (Kitz and Lane) in London. On 26 May 1882 he still signed with Edwin Dunn as secretaries an address *To the Wealth-Producers of Great Britain*, issued by the International Working Men's Association in England (for the Italian Section it was signed by Malatesta). *The Radical* paper reprinting it in its issue of 27 May, preceded it with some explanatory remarks:

Some portions of it may be interpreted in certain quarters as meaning an appeal to brute force on the part of the masses in retaliation for the brute force which is

being practised on the part of their masters. We do not think it will necessarily bear that interpretation, but in so far as it does so, we feel it our duty to express our unqualified disapproval. Force has always been the weapon of our enemy....Unless there is education...all the powder and dynamite will go for little....

The address, resuming and commenting upon 'the struggle of the people of Ireland for Independence' and warning not to 'allow your judgement to be disturbed by the great outcry over the death of two government officials in Dublin, which has been raised as an excuse to still further crush the Irish people', tells 'Fellow Workingmen' that it is 'the duty of every man, irrespective of his nationality, to assist his fellow men to extricate themselves from the state of social Slavery to which the "civilization" of to-day condemns them'.

Neve soon left England; the last number of *Freiheit* published in England was dated 3 June 1882 (Nr. 22). The next one, dated 8 July, was published in Paris where Neve went from London, and then it was published in Switzerland (first in Riesbach near Zürich and then in Dielsdorf, but not in Schaffhausen, as is usually said).

Neve stayed in Paris for most of the summer except for several trips to Switzerland to attend a conference of anarchists discussing *Freiheit* and means of agitation on 18 June 1882 at Berne, or a few meetings at Zürich, and seems to have gone also a couple of times to Germany. Like Most, he seems at this time not yet to have regarded himself as an anarchist; but he had moved from his Social Democrat convictions to a kind of Social Revolutionarism, very much influenced by Blanquism (perhaps under the influence of Andreas Scheu, Edouard Vaillant, and also Karl Schmidt), and his belief in legalistic methods certainly had vanished. The prosecutions in England had a typical effect on him, as becomes clear in a letter he wrote on 28 August 1882 from Paris:

If I have to go to prison — and that prospect doesn't frighten me — then at least I want to know what for. Let us learn something from the example of the brave Richter in Vienna [Johann Richter had been sentenced to twelve years' hard labour for having started to print a socialist leaflet in 1881], of our comrades of the *L'Etendard* [an anarchist paper published in Lyon], whose two editors were sentenced to two years' imprisonment and from Most and Merten all of which were put away for a long time just for a piece of printed paper.

At the end of October 1882 he left Paris, travelling to Switzerland and Germany to organise revolutionary cells and the distribution of forbidden literature. On 15 or 16 December he arrived in Vienna, but the police were already informed and waiting for him. He managed to hide for a week, but was arrested on 23 December. The police, however, did not succeed in proving his identity. He claimed to be a British citizen called 'Ernest Stevens', and despite a helpful British embassy he could not be proved to be lying. Kept in prison for eight

# THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY.

AN EXPOSITION AND A VINDICATION,

BY

**J. SKETCHLEY,**

*Author of Popery, its Supporters and Opponents, &c.*

WHENEVER A GOVERNMENT ENDEAVOURS, BY ARBITRARY MEASURES, TO REDUCE THE PEOPLE TO SLAVERY, THE GOVERNMENT PUTS ITSELF INTO A STATE OF WAR AGAINST THE PEOPLE, INTO A STATE OF REBELLION AGAINST THE RIGHTS OF HUMANITY, BY WHICH THE PEOPLE ARE FORCED FROM ANY FURTHER OBLIGATION OR OBLIGATION, AND ARE IN DUTY BOUND TO RESUME THOSE NATURAL RIGHTS WHICH ARE THEIR ONLY REFUGE AGAINST TYRANNY AND OPPRESSION, AND WHICH NEITHER THE DECREES OF EMERSON, NOR THE VOTES OF MAJORITIES CAN EVER EITHER ALTER, DIMINISH, OR DESTROY.

PRICE—FOURPENCE.

Printed by J. D. Sketchley, 61, Finsbury, Birmingham, and Published by the Social Democratic Party, 6, Rose Street, Essex Street, London, and may be had of the Author, 66, Hatfield Street, Birmingham, and of all Booksellers.

1879,

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

## "FREIHEIT" DEFENCE COMMITTEE.

OFFICE—6, ROSE STREET, SOHO.

On Monday March 26th, the Plant, Documents and Funds of the *Freiheit* Printing Co., were seized by the Police, and Hans Most, the Editor of the *Freiheit*, was arrested. The Workmen, who are also shareholders, upon protesting against the seizure, were forcibly ejected from the premises.

Without entering into the question as to whether the article, for publishing which Hans Most is prosecuted, is defensible or not, we wish to point out that although Royalist and Imperialist Refugees who have found shelter in England, have incited to bloodshed, in order to regain their power, their right of Asylum has never been attacked by the Government.

In defending Hans Most, we defend the right of Asylum; and being moreover morally certain that this arbitrary and illegal seizure and arrest, have been undertaken at the instigation of a Foreign Power, we appeal to all friends of freedom, to assist us in resisting this attempt to Russicize English Institutions.

All Communications will be considered as confidential, unless permission is given to treat them otherwise.

F. KITZ, } *Secretaries,*  
JOHN NEVE, }  
JOHN LORD, Treasurer,

27, LITTLE PORTLAND STREET, W.

POST OFFICE ORDERS TO BE MADE PAYABLE AT GREEK STREET, SOHO

Issued in the name of the General Committee of Delegates from Political and Labour Organizations.

months, he was deported 'for all time' from the Austro-Hungarian empire on 22 July 1883, and taken to the Bavarian frontier. Five days later he was arrested again, this time by the German police, near Hanau in South Germany. He was tried on 31 January 1884 at Hanau and sentenced to six months' imprisonment (of the detention on remand, only six weeks were taken into account). Released on 20 June 1884, he went via Strasbourg to Zürich, where he resumed organisational work for the secret distribution of *Freiheit* in Germany and Austria. But he was then one of the victims of the tougher line of the Swiss Federal Government on political exiles and especially anarchists, and was expelled on 15 December 1884. From Zürich he went again to London, where he arrived probably on 18 December and immediately took up again the work for *Freiheit*, under the name of 'James Smith', and resumed also his close cooperation with Kitz and particularly with Lane.

The CABV was doing very little political work, being preoccupied with internal quarrels mainly between Austrian émigrés who had arrived in 1884 as a consequence of the severe repression of socialist activities in Austria, and the older members and followers of Johann Most. Neve, though siding with Most whom he regarded as the best propagandist available in the German-speaking movement, tried to stay

aloof from all this, and apart from his work for *Freiheit* concentrated on taking part in Lane's local activities. He stayed for a while at Lane's place, with a German friend at 54 Grafton Street, and at Aldenham Street, Somers Town. The English police were obviously not aware that he was again active in London. He worked again as a joiner in a workshop at 18 Berners Mews, Oxford Street. A number of attempts to reconcile the warring factions in the club that he undertook led to nothing. He foresaw already very clearly that quarrels like the one between the Austrians led by Joseph Peukert (1855-1910) and Otto Rinke (1853-1899), an old friend of Kropotkin, all convinced anarcho-communists, and the followers of Most, anarcho-collectivists, social revolutionaries and 'revolutionary social democrats', would eventually ruin the whole movement. (Rinke, by the way, introduced John Henry Mackay, then still anarcho-communist, to the London movement and was Mackay's guide for his studies for the documentary novel *The Anarchists* (1891), where he is portrayed as Otto Trupp.) The growing intolerance of each other became more and more violent (as also at the same time between collectivists and communists in Spain), until on the night of 9 and 10 May 1885 during a particularly violent fight in the club's building the police together with an agitated mob broke into the building, smashing everything up and beating up most of the club members present, including Neve. The blame for having called in the police was laid on the Peukert/Rinke group, who subsequently seceded from the CABV and started their own club called Autonomie, situated first at 32 Charlotte Street (later at 6 Windmill Street), Tottenham Court Road.

Neve organised the continuance of the CABV and eventually secured Cleveland Hall as a temporary clubhouse. But he was tired of the quarrelling London movement and keen on action. The smuggling of *Freiheit* had to be reorganised again, from the Continent itself, as communication from London did not seem to be very efficient. Furthermore, as Kitz remembered (and as was already hinted at in the quotation from Neve's letter of August 1882): 'He set himself the almost Quixotic task of striking at the common enemy with weapons of destruction. Two English comrades were in the secret of his resolve [Kitz and Lane], and one [Lane] tried strongly to dissuade him from his dangerous mission; but the once gentle Neve had become an implacable foe of all government, and with unshaken determination he started to carry out his project.' In Autumn (probably October) 1885 he left London again, this time for Belgium, where he settled first at Verviers.

From there he crossed the border to Germany for the first time on 6 December 1885, and then regularly twice or three times each month to smuggle *Freiheit*, *Der Rebell* (the rival anarchist paper edited by



Peukert and Rinke in London) and pamphlets into Germany and to post them then from Aachen to the respective distributors all over the country. By mid-January the police were already looking for him at one of his cover (postal) addresses in Verviers, but he was not caught and from then was on his guard. Early in December 1885 he had asked Most in New York to provide him with explosives; but Most could not help, being himself too short of money and temporarily lacking the opportunity to procure anything of the sort. Under increasing difficulties Neve managed to keep on smuggling literature, and eventually also some explosives, into Germany during 1886. During this time, the only people he would trust in the German movement were Trunk and Victor Dave in London, who were informed about nearly everything he did or tried to do on the Continent; and, to some extent it seems, Most in New York. He still tried occasionally, so far as that was possible by letter, to reconcile the quarrelling factions in the movement, and he did his practical share in this by distributing *Der Rebell* (and then *Die Autonomie*, its successor) along with *Freiheit*. But this was to no avail. The Peukert/Rinke group, in addition to feeling as anarcho-communists so very much superior to the outdated collectivists of the Most type, were inspired by a sickening hatred and envy of Most's agitational talents and, especially on Peukert's part, a somewhat grotesque personal ambition. Most, on the other side, would never forget all the petty intrigues against him and *Freiheit*, and events like the desertion of Gustav Knauerhase, the man who had dispatched *Freiheit* from London before Neve returned there, to Peukert's group, together with the money from European *Freiheit* subscribers and the subscription list. Neve was aware of all this, and wrote in a letter on 9 February 1886, after having been warned by an Austrian to be extremely careful because his address was well-known in London to all sorts of people:

Where is now the enemy?...If one remembers that long Peukert [who was unusually tall] already some time ago in a meeting of the 'Autonomists' said that no means were too wicked to fight the 'Mostians', it occurs to me that in some back parlour in London remarks were made about my agitation here and my whereabouts, which caused Novotni [the Austrian who had warned Neve] who as follower of Peukert certainly is always present at these meetings, to send me a warning. Isn't that very probable?

Furthermore I know through Nt. [Novotny], that Peukert doesn't trust Theodor [Charles Theodore Reuss]. Therefore, as is only natural, the rebellious side [Peukert and the Club Autonomie, who published the paper *Der Rebell*] will tell [him] everything that could do us damage with the police. These scoundrels will then wash their hands of it, as Pkt [Peukert] did in the Club affair [the Stephen Mews club raid]. The English comrades have warned me against him long ago.

This letter was addressed to Victor Dave (1847-1922), a Belgian who had already been active in the First International, and is reputed to have converted Most to anarchism. He was, with Neve, Most's closest comrade in Europe; he had come to London in 1880 after being expelled from Paris. On a 'secret mission' to Germany, he was arrested on 5 December 1880 and eventually sentenced (on 21 October 1881) to two-and-a-half years' hard labour. Released in April 1884, he returned to London and became immediately the most respected member of the CABV — and, with Most, the main target for Peukert's attacks. Karl Theodor Reuss (1855-1923), in London known as Charles Theodore, had been a member of the Socialist League and on its Executive Council. He was expelled on 10 May 1886 as a spy (which, incidentally, he was).

In a way, things happened exactly as Neve foresaw in February 1886 — only that he himself played a somewhat unfortunate role in it. For, more and more impatient 'to do something' in Germany, and as Most could not provide him with the amount of explosives and poison he wanted, he eventually got in contact with Peukert who had promised to be able to get the things Neve wanted so badly. He then seems also to have received through Peukert a certain amount of dynamite (from Paris), and with this to his credit, and to discuss details of further activities, Peukert went on 1 January 1887 to Belgium to meet Neve in Liège. No doubt filled with pity, he took Reuss with him to enable him to clear himself from all charges with Neve. Neve, seeing Reuss and also seeing that he was observed by four German policemen, refused to talk to Reuss and disappeared immediately, followed by the policemen. During the following weeks, though continually shadowed by the police, he nevertheless managed a couple of times to escape their attention and to go on a smuggling trip to Germany. But on 21 February 1887, he was arrested by Belgian police as a 'tramp' when leaving a café with a friend and both were immediately taken to the border and turned over to the German authorities. On the same day a letter of his arrived in Berlin saying among other things:

Peukert has had the inexcusable thoughtlessness to betray my secret hiding-place to Reuss.... I just want to wait till the election swindle is over... if then everybody [in the movement] falls again in the old groove, I will retire to a part of the world where nobody will hear anything from me. Youngers shall then fill my place.... The masses are blind and do not learn to see through things. There is nothing more suitable than that election day and Carnival fall on the same day; then all the worthy members of parliament can dance with their carnival cap around the ballot box. One should laugh, but it is extremely sad....

In October 1887 Neve was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment in a trial at Leipzig from which the public was excluded. He was first brought to Halle prison from where he managed to send a couple of

letters to friends in London; after January 1888 all the news about him that reached his former friends (and enemies) in London was what a few released fellow prisoners told — that he was separated most of the time from the rest of the prisoners; that he looked very ill; that he was being tortured. On 26 September 1888 he was transferred to the Moabit prison in Berlin, his mind gone; there he died on 8 December 1896, from tuberculosis contracted during his imprisonment.

The *Sozialdemokrat*, the paper of the German Social Democrats at that time published in Zürich, published in its issue of 13 May 1887 an article, 'How John Neve was delivered into the hands of the Prussian police', based on information from a police spy who had been involved in the affair, and accusing Peukert and Reuss of betraying Neve. When the *Commonweal* repeated the story, Reuss brought a libel action against William Morris demanding £1,000 damages. Victor Dave collected evidence for Morris to prove that the statements made were correct, helped to some extent by Social Democrats such as Karl Kautsky, and the former police spy Max Trautner who had provided the information for the original article. Trautner, who then came to live for a while in London, was also paid by Morris to write a book based on his documentation of the activities of the police and the informers; the socialist publisher Swan Sonnenschein was prepared to publish it. Edward Aveling, Elanor Marx's companion, was meant to act as ghost-writer. But Trautner had the impression that Aveling was trying to cheat him out of his hard-earned money, and eventually withdrew and is said in the end to have sold his documentation on the activities of the Prussian police to the same body!

Reuss never pursued his libel action in court — he achieved what he obviously wanted: that it should be impossible to discuss his 'achievements' in the British press. Eight years later, then a member of the circle around Bismarck's son Herbert, he tried to do the same with Wilhelm Liebknecht and the German Social Democrats who had published, in the Berlin *Vorwaerts*, a repeat of the 1887 story.

After this affair the German-speaking movement was ruined for a long time, the quarrel now no longer centring on anarcho-communism and its superiority over collectivism (which Most in any case now also believed), but on Peukert and whether he was a conscious traitor or 'just' culpable of asinine stupidity, the main battleground eventually shifting to the United States, where Peukert went, and then involving Emma Goldman, who never quite understood why Most reacted so bitterly to what he saw as her siding with Peukert.

Neve himself was soon forgotten or just a kind of catchword to trigger off all sorts of emotions; only a few English friends tried to do something about his fate, and Fred Charles went to Zürich for some

months to learn German and to find out about possibilities of organising an escape for Neve. But he soon returned discouraged.

Frank Kitz, however, concluding his obituary of Neve, could note the change of tone towards the movement now. Then, when we sallied out to hold our meetings, we were all adjective Germans or blasted foreigners, and many a Cockney adherent, who had never been beyond happy Hampstead in his life, has been told to go back to his own country and not come preaching this rubbish to Englishmen.... From being derided and abused we got to be listened to, and thus a handful of hardworking men, devoid of 'culchaw' and the presence of 'dramatic critics', set a ball rolling in England....

Max Nettlau summed up Johann Neve in two sentences of his obituary:

He had been, at one time, almost the soul of the German Anarchist Movement, and was one of those comrades who devoted their lives fully and unreservedly to the cause....He will always live in the memory of comrades.

#### Notes

Materials used to gain information for this article come from police files in archives in Brussels, Paris, Düsseldorf, Potsdam, Wiesbaden; letters and manuscript reminiscences in the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, and the British Library; and a wide range of printed material including files of *Vorwaerts*; *West Central News*; *National Reformer*; *The Republican (Chronicle)*; *Secularist Review & Secularist*; *The Radical*; *Freiheit*; *Die Autonomie*; *Der Rebell*; scattered issues of London dailies and weeklies.

Obituaries of Neve were published in *Freedom* by \*\* (Max Nettlau, February and March 1897) and by Frank Kitz (April 1897); John Most (in *Freiheit*, 31 December 1896; 9, 16 and 23 January 1897); Gustav Landauer (in *Der Sozialist*, Berlin, 2 January 1897).

Published reminiscences include those by Frank Kitz, Andreas Scheu (the most reliable ones), Karl Schneidt, Franz Josef Ehrhart and Josef Peukert.

Important are Rudolf Rocker's (in English still unpublished) *Johann Most: Das Leben eines Rebellen*, Berlin 1924-25 ('Johann Most: the Life of a Rebel'), and Max Nettlau's *Geschichte der Anarchie* ('History of Anarchy'), especially vol. 3 (1931) and 5 (1984). Occasionally informative but much less reliable are more recent 'studies': Ulrich Linse, *Organisierter Anarchismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich von 1871*, Berlin 1969; Andrew Carlson, *Anarchism in Germany*. Vol 1: *The Early Years*, Metuchen, New Jersey, 1972.

In connection with the *Freiheit* prosecutions an important article despite minor inaccuracies — Bernard Porter, 'The *Freiheit* Prosecutions 1881-1882', *Historical Journal* 23, 1980, pp. 833-856.

## Colin Ward

### Self-Help in Urban Renewal

In his introductory essay to the modern editions of Ebenezer Howard's book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* — the book and the author responsible for the founding of the Town and Country Planning Association at the end of the last century — Lewis Mumford remarks that 'with his gift for sweet reasonableness Howard hoped to win Tory and Anarchist, single-taxer and socialist, individualist and collectivist, over to his experiment. And his hopes were not altogether discomfited; for in appealing to the English instinct for finding common ground he was utilising a solid political tradition.'

The Association itself, operating in a political world, has always had to win support from that small number of politicians in any party who are actually interested in planning issues, or to educate those who actually hold office, nationally and locally. This is a task which of course becomes more and more difficult with the apparent polarisation of politics and political attitudes.

I am notoriously a non-political person. I always aspire to attain Ebenezer Howard's gift of sweet reasonableness, and to win over people from both right and left. But, alas, I seem to have a knack of antagonising both sides. I don't do it to annoy because I know it teases, I am simply obliged to do it because I have a different view of the world. And if my subject is 'self-help in urban renewal', I have to begin by antagonising everyone.

Let me begin by antagonising the left, by saying that a major example of self-help in urban renewal has been the process stigmatised as 'gentrification'. We have a stereotype of young, pushing, upwardly mobile, middle-class trendies (or whatever adjective suits you best) driving old and poor working-class tenants out of their traditional habitat. We all used to have our horror-stories about Rachmanism, and we all had our ready-made sneers about the in-comers. What we mostly remained silent about was that the particular middle-class trendies driving out the traditional inhabitants were in fact the officers of the local authorities pursuing the then fashionable trends in urban renewal.

This is why Wilfred Burns, Newcastle's planning officer and subsequently the Government's chief planner, was able to say that 'when we are dealing with people who have no initiative or civic pride,

the task, surely, is to break up such groupings even though the people seem to be satisfied with their miserable environment and seem to enjoy an extravert social life in their own locality' (*New Towns for Old: The Techniques of Urban Renewal*, 1963); and it explains why another Newcastle architect, Bruce Allsop, felt obliged to remark that 'it is astonishing with what savagery planners and architects are trying to obliterate working-class cultural and social patterns. Is it because many of them are first-generation middle-class technosnobs?' (*Towards a Humane Architecture*, 1974).

Nobody cared to listen in the 1950s and 1960s, and even in the 1970s, when the cash was still swilling about in the urban renewal bran-tub, to those who pointed to the grotesque paradox that a line drawn on a map in town halls and county hall selected one side of whole streets for demolition and redevelopment as unfit for human habitation, while on the other side of that line absolutely identical houses, blighted by the redevelopment process, were beginning their upward progress, aided by the merry whirr of Black and Decker, into the desirable residence end of the market. A comparison of the bizarre prices that the rescued houses fetch today with the sorry state of the estate opposite is interesting in pondering the conclusion reached a decade ago by Dr Graham Lomas (formerly deputy strategic planner for the Greater London Council) that in London more *fit* houses had been destroyed by public authorities than had been built since the war (*The Inner City*, 1975).

The orgy of publicly financed destruction and of slapping compulsory purchase orders on everything in sight (which eventually reached the pitch that really progressive authorities like the GLC were actually setting in motion the procedure of compulsory purchase on properties they already owned) was followed by what should have been the gentler, more creative climate of General Improvement Areas and Housing Action Areas. Once again the *official* gentrifiers from the town hall took command, and urban renewal took the form of cobbles and bollards, and planting in the street. Several people here must remember Susan Howard's tragi-comic account, at the TCPA's 1974 conference on Housing Action: the Opportunities and the Dangers, of the experience of the first General Improvement Area in Leicester. At that conference Jim Grove underlined the principle that 'sovereignty over decisions must lie with the inhabitants' and Lawrence Hansen of Waltham Forest made the very significant remark that 'house improvements have value only as perceived by the occupants'.

We were now in the era of Public Participation. All of us here must have had the experience of attending those meetings of citizens held in the name of participation to discover what residents actually wanted,

where *invariably* residents wanted things that the special central government cash could not provide: an improvement of ordinary municipal services, the kind of things that councils actually existed to provide — things like street-paving, street-lighting, street-cleaning and refuse-collection. They were revealing an unmentionable fact: that there has always been a hierarchy of excellence in these services, based on who complains most. The presence of complaining gentrifiers in fact pushed up standards for everyone.

There was one General Improvement Area in the country which was proposed, implemented and subsequently managed by the residents themselves. It was also an example of the ironical crudity of official designations of places, for it moved in a few years from being a Clearance Area not worth saving to being a Conservation Area where every brick became part of our Priceless Architectural Heritage. That street was of course Black Road, Macclesfield, and it owed its transformation to the fact that in 1971 a young gentrifying architect moved in because it was cheap and had his application for an improvement grant turned down because his slum cottage was 'structurally unsound'. He, of course, spiralled up to becoming the next president of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and must often reflect on the truth of the remark of Samuel Smiles in his celebrated book *Self-Help* where the author remarks that 'the duty of helping one's self in the highest sense involves helping one's neighbours'.

Now what have these gentrifiers got, apart from an expanding asset in a milieu of dwindling assets? They have *dweller control*, which people like me always insist is the first principle of housing, more important than housing standards assessed from outside. And the other thing they have is *know-how*: that is, they know how to work the system. The whole thrust of the TCPA's innovations in the 1970s, with their planning aid service and their environmental education service, was towards expanding this kind of knowledge into something available for everyone.

I now have to antagonise the right by asserting that a further major example of self-help in urban renewal is the process stigmatised as squatting. We have a stereotype of vandals, junkies and dole scroungers jumping the housing queue, and we have all heard squatter horror-stories and have done for years. They are as untypical as the tales about the gentrifiers. We all know the reasons for the growth of organised squatting since the late 1960s. In the crude duopoly that emerged in postwar British housing in the period between owner-occupation and council tenancy, whole categories of people — notably the young, single and childless — were left out of account altogether, for housing policy was based upon the standard family of

two parents and two-and-a-half children, even though by now this unit has been overtaken by demographic facts and is a tiny statistical minority of households. Sub-letting and taking in lodgers — the traditional way of getting a room for the mobile young — was usually specifically forbidden by mortgage agreements in one category and by tenancy agreements in the other. At the self-same time, policies of accumulating huge sites for eventual comprehensive redevelopment left a vast number of houses either slowly rotting awaiting demolition, or similarly rotting awaiting eventual renovation. Policy itself, as Graham Lomas stressed, 'left great areas unoccupied and ripe targets for vandalism and squatting' (*The Inner City*).

Fortunately the squatters sometimes got there before the unofficial vandals. The response of the authorities was interesting. Central government changed the law on squatting for the first time since the fourteenth century — although squatting is neither criminal nor illegal, it is simply unlawful (see the *Squatters' Handbook*). Local government in many places distinguished itself by destroying its own property to keep squatters out — ripping out services, smashing sanitary fittings, and pouring wet concrete down drains. In others it employed so-called 'private investigators' as agents of the council to terrorise and intimidate squatting families (see Nick Wates and Christian Wolmar, *Squatting: The Real Story*, 1980). On several occasions councils actually blamed the squatters for damage to property done on their instructions by their own employees.

Just in case you, either in the past or today (when there are 50,000 squatters in London), believed the stories told about squatters, surveys showed that in Haringey 51 per cent were actually people with children, in Lambeth over 60 per cent, and in Cardiff 77 per cent. And what property did they squat? 'The Haringey survey found that of 122 squats, only three were required by the Council as part of its permanent housing stock (i.e. ready to let). Over half were privately owned and those owned by the council were either awaiting renovation or demolition. The squats had been empty, on average, for over six months. And a survey on squatters in council property commissioned by the Department of the Environment found that only one-sixth of the sample was in permanent stock, and that even much of this was regarded as "difficult to let". The reality is not that squatters jump the housing waiting list or deprive others of a home but rather that they opt out of the queue altogether and make use of houses that would otherwise be empty.' (*Squatting: The Real Story*)

The squatters' movement has been a most remarkable example of self-help in urban renewal, since it has operated against every kind of obstruction and opposition. So keen have they been on urban renewal



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that the Department of the Environment survey found that 71 per cent of squatters claimed to have made some kind of improvement to the property they occupied. One of them, Andy Ingham, wrote a *Self Help House Repairs Manual* specifically for squatters, published by Penguin in 1975 and continually reprinted. Of course the one thing most squatters most desire is legitimisation with a rent book, and the London Borough of Lewisham was the pioneer authority in 'licensed squats'. Several of our most enterprising and successful housing co-operatives have grown out of the squatters' movement. In a forthcoming study of housing co-operatives, Dr Johnston Birchall of the Institute of Community Studies reminds us that some well-established co-ops, like Seymour Co-op in West London, grew out of squatters who 'took on the management of short-life property and then evolved as they gained experience and confidence, into the promotion of long-life co-ops' and that short-life housing in general 'originated out of the squatters' movement' (*Building Communities: The Co-operative Way*, 1988). Roof Housing Co-operative in Lambeth evolved from a squat by people who were convinced that housing allocation policy was discriminatory. (Surveys conducted by the Commission for Racial Equality showed that their conviction was correct.) Jheni Arboine, the secretary, told Shelter that 'the days when white middle-class people determined the needs of black people are over so far as we are concerned. Groups like ours are going some way towards destroying the "old boy network" that exists in housing, a network that until recently excluded anyone who was black.' She goes on to say that 'black people are now prepared to take on their own housing problems and we no longer want or need white missionary types to treat us like poor people with problems that we're not capable of solving ourselves' (*Roof*, November/December 1986). The squatters' movement, just like gentrification, is a great know-how builder: a lesson in the art of working the system. It's a lesson in dweller control.

And a consideration of the evolution of several groups from despised squatters to admired co-operators leads me to my last case-history of self-help in urban renewal, based once again on what has actually happened, rather than on what could happen, or what I would like to happen. Ideology may prevent you from learning from the gentrifiers on the one hand and the squatters on the other, but I want for my final example to evoke Ebenezer Howard's 'gift of sweet reasonableness' in 'appealing to the English instinct for finding common ground'.

Housing co-operatives, of which we had hardly any fifteen years ago, but of which we have several hundreds today, ought to appeal right across the political spectrum. They should win the support of the present Government — and in fact a clause in the Housing and Planning Act of 1986, which came into force in January 1987, allows

local authorities to delegate the management of houses and flats to tenant co-operatives as well as giving tenants' groups the right to put such a proposition on the council's agenda'. They should win the support of the present Opposition, since the co-operative movement as a whole was part of that network of organs of working-class self-help and mutual aid which created the labour movement in the nineteenth century. And they should appeal to the various parties in between.

It was my privilege in November 1986 to chair a meeting which brought together the various people from up and down the country who are involved in monitoring the experience of co-operative housing. (It is precisely because this form of dweller-controlled self-help has been neglected for a century that we have had to gain experience and learn about the successes and failures in a hurry.) One of the striking things about the preliminary findings that we were told about concerned precisely the burning question of repairs and renovations — of urban renewal, in fact. For example, Peter Bolan of Bristol Polytechnic reported that, at Cloverhill Self-Management Co-operative at Rochdale, there was felt to be 'considerable improvement especially on smaller repairs'. David Clapham of Glasgow University reported on his research in the very interesting large-scale transfer of former council housing in Glasgow to tenant co-operatives. He found that among tenants it was thought immensely important that tenants themselves should be able to organise and carry out not only minor and major repairs, but also renovations and modernisation programmes, and that *they* and not the council should employ people for this purpose. It was Glasgow's Director of Housing who declared last year that 'our greatest resource is not our 171,000 council houses, but the tenants. The potential is there waiting to be released' (*Roof*, July/August 1986). And at that same meeting Anthea Tinker, giving a preliminary account of the Department of the Environment's current research on housing co-operatives, found 'a high degree of satisfaction. The speed and quality of repairs are valued more than anything else' (to be reported in *Housing Review*).

We have varieties of self-help in urban renewal to suit all tastes. What we need is not only a huge extension of access to finance, but a broadening of access to know-how and a simplification of procedures. We also need, as Ebenezer Howard insisted ninety years ago, to burst the bubble of urban land valuation.

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A talk given on 27 January 1987 to the Town and Country Planning Association conference on 'Our Deteriorating Housing Stock: Financing and Managing New Solutions'.

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*David Koven***Walden Center and School**

The main emphasis of anarchists has always been to find ways of replacing existing exploitative societies with a communal, cooperative form, a social format in which each individual has voice and power. To this end, anarchists have been involved in the communitarian movement ever since the first experimental communities were established. In the United States from the 1840s, anarchists have either established or participated in intentional communities structured along non-authoritarian lines. There were anarchists in communities inspired by the communitarian thinking of Robert Owen, Charles Fourier or William Morris, all of whom conceived of communities without centralised authoritarian structures and all of whom were hostile to the extension of rampant nineteenth-century industrialism. They looked instead toward communities that emphasised agriculture and decentralised home industry and craftsmanship as a means of producing the necessities for society.

Anarchists also have been involved with experiments in alternative means of cooperative production and consumer organisation. While many people are aware of the heroic struggle that the Spanish anarchists mounted in their resistance to Franco during the Spanish Civil War, few are aware of the fact that at the same time they were establishing agricultural communes and cooperatives, took over the industries abandoned by the supporters of Franco, and operated them communally.

In experiments in alternative education, similarly, anarchists will be found in the forefront. There have been experimental schools started by and encouraged by anarchists in almost every country. Louisa May Alcott received all her formal education in alternative school environments started by her father, Bronson Alcott. Francisco Ferrer, an anarchist educator, was executed by the Spanish authorities in 1909 for daring to challenge the Catholic Church's hegemony over education, when he established the first free school in Spain, the Modern School. Soon after, a school started in New York City, that later moved to Stelton NJ, named the Francisco Ferrer School in honour of his memory. This anarchist school continued to function until the Second World War. In almost every anarchist colony or commune, one of the

first things they would address themselves to was the creation of a school. For, in anarchist thinking, the idea of turning children over to the stultifying influence of a public school system was repugnant.

Here I shall describe a modern alternative school, of which I was one of the founding group, the Walden Center and School, which happily is still functioning well almost thirty years after it was started.

A group of anarchists and pacifists came together at the end of 1956 to begin a series of discussions about the feasibility of starting an alternative school. We spent the time between our first meeting and spring 1958 getting to know each other better, and discussing the form our school should take. Despite our shared anarchist and libertarian pacifist views, our diverse backgrounds mandated this period of discussion and clarification, but we all had young children whom we were reluctant to turn over to public schools, and this held us together and created the atmosphere of dedication and trust that enabled us to proceed. The group consisted of four pairs of men and women, either married or living together as couples, and a single woman recently divorced. Three of the men had been imprisoned during the war for their opposition to the war. Two of us had been actively involved with the anti-war group that published *Resistance*, an anarchist magazine published in New York throughout the war. We had left New York with two other comrades to establish a cooperative community, but by 1956 it had disintegrated. We were parenting two young children and looking for alternative ways of educating them, and we were moved by the desire to implement our political ideas. Our attempt at intentional community and our desire to try alternative ways of educating children were our means of approaching anarchism. Our thinking was influenced by discussions with Paul Goodman, the writings of Tony Gibson in the English anarchist press, and knowledge of the work of Homer Lane and A. S. Neill and their schools. We took the name 'Walden' from Thoreau's classic account of living by Walden Pond a century before.

The Walden Group complemented each other in a multitude of ways. We all had high energy levels and a wide variety of talents. Three of the women brought talents for and deep knowledge of literature, music, dance, mathematics, and educational methods and process. They formed our beginning teaching group. The men brought organisational skills, backgrounds in fund-raising, athletics, architecture and design, and practical skills in the building trades. Not the least of the gifts brought to the school was a house high on the east slope of the Sierra Nevada which two of the Walden families had built after the men had been released from prison. After the school started this place became a second location for Walden, where children and teachers could come

for long visits and could learn about wilderness, and from where they had the opportunity to explore the natural wonder-world of mountains and deserts and volcanic structure. Finally, not the least gift that one of the founders brought to Walden was the ability to rescue the school when it had a serious financial problem.

### School begins

By spring 1958 a tentative philosophy for Walden had been completed and we decided to begin. We had been unsuccessful in finding a permanent site for our school, so we began in quarters rented from the Humanist Society in Oakland, California. For a nominal rent, they allowed us to use their hall. The space consisted of a large meeting room, a couple of small rooms, and a good-sized outdoor space. Since the Humanists used this space only at weekends and occasional evenings, there was no conflict of use. We began with our own children and the children of some friends, ranging from kindergarten-age children to two girls who would leave us the following year for Junior High School. During this exploratory year we concentrated on testing our ideas. We strove to build a form that reflected our anarchist pacifist views. At the same time, we continued to search for a permanent site.

Perhaps because the Catholic Church has such political clout in California, they brook no interference with their own parochial school system. Therefore the official requirements we had to meet in order to function 'legally' as a school were minimal. The state law required that we have an appropriate number of toilets per number of children, teach 'some form' of civics and American history, and take and keep a daily attendance record. The state made no requirements of the educational qualifications, interest or ability of the teachers. In addition we had to incorporate under state law, which we did, as a non-profit foundation, named Walden Center and School.

In 1959 we found, in a commercially zoned, mixed light-industrial and working-class residential area of Berkeley, California, a three-lot parcel of land that suited our purposes. Two of the founding families put up money they had set aside to purchase homes for themselves as the down payment on the property in the name of the school. Happily, in 1960 money was loaned to the school by another of the founding group, enabling us to pay back the original loans. The property on the corner of Dwight Way and McKinley Street in Berkeley had four old houses on it. In the fall of 1959, we began Walden on the site that it still occupies. After some assiduous fund-raising, we began our new construction. Because it was impossible to make the buildings conform to local fire ordinances, we eventually razed three of them. We were

able to restore one of the original buildings, and this building became, and remains, our kindergarten. Over the next five years, we constructed five new classrooms. We designed and built a large dance studio/music room which also served as our auditorium, a large art studio, and a small office space. We were assisted in our building project by an East Coast comrade who loaned us money for construction of some of the buildings, interest-free. He also came out to California to oversee the construction of our first classrooms, in addition to which he donated a decorative copper enamel frieze for the new classrooms by the well-known artist, John Hultburg.

### Walden as Center

When we conceived of Walden, we thought of it not only as a means of educating children in a freer environment, but also as a centre for education and action in the adult community — as reflected in our name. Walden became a centre from which emanated a vital discussion of and participation in the concerns of the 'Walden Family', and the community in which they lived and functioned.

Walden was instrumental in forcing the city of Berkeley to discard the practice of requiring a sworn loyalty oath if one wished to use city facilities. (We were still suffering from the effects of the witch-hunts of the McCarthy period.) We were involved in the production of our first dance and musical production, *The Nuremberg Stove*, and since we still hadn't constructed our performance space, we sought to use one of the city's, located in a city park. When we refused to sign the loyalty oath and threatened to involve the American Civil Liberty Union in the case, the attorney for Berkeley advised the city to back down, and the required loyalty oath was deleted from city ordinances governing use of city property. Ironically, we didn't use the park after all, but found a more suitable space in another private school.

Because of the radical background of the founders of Walden, it was quite natural to find them and the parents and children of Walden in the vanguard of the demonstrations that erupted in Berkeley in the late 1950s and early 1960s. We were in the forefront of the first picket lines at the Radiation Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley, protesting against the testing of atomic weapons in the atmosphere. When the protest took the form of sit-downs in front of the AEC office in Berkeley, we were there again. When our anarchist comrade, George Benello, attempted to sail the trimaran, *Everyman II*, to the Bikini Atoll test site, and was captured by the Coast Guard and towed back to San Francisco under arrest, we had a protest picket line in front of the Hall of Justice to greet him and his crew when they were brought in for

arraignment. This demo consisted entirely of Walden people and their friends, some of whom had not participated in public protest before.

At Walden we also held regular public discussion meetings to which the entire local community was invited. We had speakers discussing a variety of topics: Anarchism; Pacifism; Intentional Community; Workplace Democracy; Electoral Politics; and, of course, Education. Since we posted announcements about the meetings, they provided a forum for the Walden core group and many people from around the Berkeley community. Not the least important function that Walden played at this time was to give the Vietnam Day Committee a public meeting-place for its first organisational meetings, after they had been refused space on the Berkeley campus. I am convinced that the happenchance of these first meetings taking place at Walden helped to establish the libertarian form and tone of the VDC which made it unique among protest organisations at that time. In addition, many of us remained actively involved with the VDC, and continued to work to end the war in Vietnam. If nothing more, the concept of 'Walden as Center' contributed to and was part of the vital, engaged atmosphere for all of us, founders and families, and it enriched all of our lives.

### **Financing the school**

We were fortunate in having individuals who were able to loan money to purchase the property and build our classrooms, individuals to whom we are deeply grateful. But I think that the greatest financial contribution to Walden was that made by the founder teachers of Walden. For the first five years of the school's life, they worked without payment. Their contribution and that of their companions, through moral and financial support, were the most important factors enabling Walden to get through those first years of struggle. Of course, they all received the invaluable recompense of directly contributing to the education of their own children in an environment of their own design. But Walden expanded rapidly, and we soon had to reach beyond the founding group to find new teachers. We realised that any teacher who chose to work at Walden would need to make an enormous economic sacrifice. They could earn more than double what we could afford in the public school system. From the very beginning, we realised that our most important goal would be to try to make it possible for teachers who had opted to work with us to remain with us by paying them at least enough to sustain them. We had to find ways of keeping the school on a sound financial basis. Our low tuition rate of \$450 a year wasn't sufficient to support the school; thus we sought other ways of underwriting the cost of operating. We realised that contributions of

money, labour and talent were of prime importance, and we began searching for ways to enable friends and families of Walden to contribute to our effort.

Anarchist comrades raised money for us at picnics, and some of them donated regularly. One weekend, soon after our first classrooms and dance studio were constructed, a group of anarchist gardeners arrived to install a large grassy area to serve as a playfield for the school. It was contributions such as this — the construction labour of many of the parents and founders, fund-raising in the form of benefit concerts and performances, and our annual spring book fair — that enabled us to use our slim monetary reserves for teaching materials and to aspire each year to raise the teachers' pay. These, and the labour contribution of the parents in the form of gardening, cleaning up and staffing the office, were and remain the most important sources of Walden's well-being.

### **Our philosophy develops**

Perhaps the question of educational philosophy can be best approached by quoting from two pieces published in our school paper, *The Pond*, in 1960. The first quotation is from the editorial that I wrote, the second from a piece written by Denny Wilcher, another of the founding group. You'll find here in our Pond, work of our children. Poems, drawings, songs and stories, the feelings and thoughts that motivate teachers in their work, reports on events, children's activities off the school grounds, a financial report, discussions of how we function, the day-to-day life at school, and we hope to see some humour.

On the first of March our school held the first of a series of regular meetings between parents and teachers. A meeting intimate! The visiting of the rooms where our children spend so much of their daily life. The welter of books and drawings, the charts, and projects in clay and paper maché. Everywhere the evidence of work and fun and thought. The tête à tête with the teachers. Lee proudly showing the songs that the children have composed; Audrey, the books the children have written and the farm constructed of clay. Ida sitting you down to listen to the tapes the children are working on, etc. etc.

Later, the meeting public! The broader issues. To test or not? More time for the traditional skills at the expense of creativity? Must we gear our curriculum to that of the public schools? What will be the role of parents in our school? The need for work contributions from everyone, and finally reports on the piano lessons, the Wednesday art program, and the planned mural for the east wall of the new building.

Imagine a school meeting at which the separation between staff and parents is dissolved. No bureaucracy here, no professional jargon, no condescension. Just concern, and thought and a real desire to communicate. Imagine a school in which staff can publicly differ on aspects of philosophical view and tactical



approach, (there's more than one way) and yet feel for and help one another. Here was affirmation of our view of education as an open, growing, experimental, vital set of relationships.

In the same issue, Denny Wilcher wrote:

It has seemed to me from the beginning of our discussions that the ideal situation would be one in which the entire family is involved on some meaningful basis. By meaningful basis, I mean a condition where real needs can be satisfied. The possibility of this lies not only in the creation of a physical center but of that psychological climate which not only permits but actually encourages relationship and participation.

Of all institutions, the school demands some reasonable social cohesiveness in which to take root and grow. For a long time I have felt that what is taken for a common set of values in the general culture behind the public school system is really a set of slogans derived primarily from the vocabulary of 19th-century liberalism. It has also seemed to me that many of the school practices have been adapted from another contribution of the 19th century, the factory system. This is exemplified in internal administrative organization, in architecture and in the drive toward production of the best possible standardized product at the lowest possible cost per unit. If this kind of situation exists, the school becomes not a general center of interest for a participating family but a sort of internally driven technological process which uses raw material supplied in the form of children. Parents cannot be effectively related, are in fact rebuffed partly by virtue of the logical assumption that education of children had best be left to engineer-technicians.

We have thought a great deal about these matters at Walden, and have gradually come to the realization that, for us, a school and some kind of general cultural-educational center are inseparable. On a practical level, we hope that uses for a very expensive and what we hope will be a very attractive property will be found as various groupings of parents and friends form around mutually shared interests or convictions. But more deeply, we feel that in the process of educating ourselves and of expressing ourselves we will develop that general community of shared values which will give life, direction and inspiration to the school itself. The eventual aim would be a kind of general educational environment of children, parents and teachers, the implications of which would be evident on some level to every child in the school. The hope would be then that this school education would be a more natural extension of the family and group experience and not an isolated process to which the child is subjected...

In the year before the opening of Walden, we worked out a basic structure and style that still influence the way Walden functions. We borrowed from our anarchist pacifist philosophy and tried to establish a form that would prevent the creation of a bureaucracy. We conceived of an unregimented educational environment — a free-flowing interchange between teachers, children, parents and foundation members. We avoided the common concepts of democracy, which too often enable small 'political' groups to capture and dominate cooperative and collective endeavours. We had seen other schools organised as

parent/teacher cooperatives almost destroyed by political infighting by parent/teacher coalitions, advancing their Marxist agenda. For them, political expediency and orthodoxy were obviously more important than their dedication to education.

Therefore the Walden founders decided that decision-making would occur only when we were able to reach consensus. We also decided, in order to prevent our group from becoming stodgy and self-satisfied, to invite new teachers to join in the decision-making as part of the Walden Foundation, after they had been with us for two years. In addition, after a family had been in Walden some time and showed a dedication to and understanding of what we were trying to accomplish, they too, on recommendation of any of the Walden Foundation members, would be invited to join the board. This constant broadening of the base of decision-making made for an anarchistic process that still influences life at Walden. Decision-making by consensus can be a slow process at times, but it also insures against the formation of an ambitious, power-seeking minority group.

### **A Philosophy of Function**

We wanted to create an optimum atmosphere for educating our children, so the first practice we implemented was to limit our group size to a maximum of 15 children. We looked with distaste at the public schools, where class sizes reached 30 or more children. These crowded conditions militate against teachers being able to relate to children directly and intimately, and the crowded classrooms become, for the most part, holding cells where maintenance of 'order', rather than education, takes precedence.

Because so many of the Walden founding group were involved in or interested in 'the arts', we were convinced that if we centred our curriculum on the artistic experience and sensibility, allowing children and teachers to freely explore the performing, musical and visual arts, we could arouse their passions, and in these passionate moments create an excitement that would inflame and inform the learning atmosphere at Walden. In addition, we also believed that a 'core curriculum' centred on artistic experience and expression would encourage all the basic skills to develop smoothly. In addition to our emphasis on the artistic experience, we placed equal emphasis on enabling the children to develop familiarity with, and knowledge and love of, the natural world. In short, we conceived of and tried to create an exciting, 'turned on', energy-filled school.

We were convinced that average children would benefit and grow in the environment of a small, responsive school. We weren't Neill's



*Students and teacher at the gate, Walden School, Berkeley, California.*





*A visit to the San Francisco Examiner newspaper.*











*Searching for an ancient wall in Tilden Park with naturalist Tim Gordon.*



*Alan McRae, one of the school  
founders – still active.*

*John Vattuone, anarchist farmer  
and co-founder of Walden School.*



Summerhill, and we had neither the time nor the skills for therapy. Therefore, when a new family visited Walden with the intention of enrolling their child, we spent a great deal of intensive time with them. The parents were interviewed both by foundation members and by the teacher in whose group the child would be placed if accepted. We wanted to make sure that the parents understood clearly who we were and what we were attempting to accomplish. If they couldn't comprehend our philosophy, or had serious differences of opinion with us, we would encourage them to seek another school which more closely mirrored their needs. The child would then visit the group that he or she would work with and the teacher would evaluate the child's ability to work with and interact with the rest of the group. Ultimately, the teacher made the final decision about whether a new family would be accepted or rejected as a prospective Walden Family.

Miles Karpilow is a superb cabinet-maker whose contributions and dedication to Walden have been enormous. He designed and built many of our interior cabinets and counters. He also created much of the outdoor play equipment. Eventually he became an active member of the Foundation. He recently remembered the first interview his family had when they decided to send their children to Walden. He recalled how amazed they were when Denny Wilcher came to their home in San Francisco to interview them. He said that they received the impression that it was almost as difficult to get their children into Walden as it would be to crack Fort Knox. Needless to say, a similar, but more rigorous process was used when we interviewed new teachers. Obviously, in the almost thirty years of Walden's existence, we have from time to time erred in judgement about new families or teachers, but these mistakes were few and far between. We feel reassured, when we examine the process from the point of view of the longevity of the school, that the process is viable, for it still is in use today.

### **The day to day**

In a school in which there is no central authority to determine procedures to be followed, in a school in which all the teachers are autonomous and develop curricula from their experience and internal direction, aided of course by the discussions that take place with other teachers and board members, the daily process must of necessity differ from group to group. Obviously, in subsequent eras of Walden's life, the differences in temperament and philosophy of the teaching staff of the time influenced the daily rhythm of school life. The first seven years of Walden's life were marked by the emphasis on the many dance and music productions. The staff, parents, and children designed and

performed what may have been the most fantastic, creative and lavish children's theatre in the United States during this period. Some of the musical and dance productions we produced during this time were, *Tistou of the Green Thumbs*, a French anti-militarist fantasy, for which the children created all of the music; a dance adaptation of the German tale, *The Nuremburg Stove*, for which Ida, our dance teacher, and the children created all of the choreography; and an adaptation of Maeterlinck's *The Bluebird*, for which Lee, our music teacher, and many of the parents composed all of the music and formed the orchestra that performed it. We also produced a version of Hindemith's *Let's Build a Town*, which included almost everyone in the school. In addition to these large productions, there were a multitude of less lavishly mounted, improvisational productions. The teachers used the productions to explore the other facets of the times in which the dramas were set. The teaching curricula explored the art, the history, the literature, and the attitudes of the peoples of the times. We tried to implement all of the basic skills, using these materials.

When I talked to a number of Walden graduates recently about their memories, they unanimously agreed that the participation in the dance and music productions were the strongest memories they possessed, and that this participation had a profound effect on their future attitudes toward the arts. My daughter, Nora, who started in Walden as a kindergartener, remembered the productions as being energy-creating and exciting, but she also thought the trips to the cabin in the High Sierra, the camp-outs in the wilderness, the desert trips, and even the one-day excursions away from school, were equally important.

Her memories of the day-to-day classroom routine, by contrast, were sketchy. Her main criticism was that in our efforts to avoid acting as therapists, we were too laid back and allowed some painful group interactions to occur. This was particularly true in the dynamics between the boys and girls. She felt that these conflicts would have been more satisfactorily resolved if the teachers had intervened more positively. Naturally the daily routine varied with each group and teacher. But generally, part of each morning was spent in interchange of ideas within the group. The vulgar word 'sharing', used today to describe communication between members of a group, would be inadequate to describe some of the morning sessions I sat in at. Everything and anything, from politics to religion to pacifism to music to personal problems, was open to discussion. After the morning session, the group would go on to what intellectual work they had scheduled. In addition, each group scheduled time each day in the art studio, the dance studio or the music studio. I remember Audrey working with a lower grade group on a farm project. They read books

about farm life and farm animals. The children then wrote their own books on farm life. With Barbara's help, they created a miniature farm of ceramic figures. A group of parents fenced in a piece of land behind Audrey's classroom, and John, our anarchist farmer/comrade, brought down an assortment of young farm animals for the children to raise, during the spring session. The farm became a focus not only for Audrey's group, but for the entire school. Each group and each teacher had projects in which all the school became involved, and which created the energy source we anticipated for Walden. When I visited the school recently to confer with the present teachers, I was struck by the fact that the same air of excitement and free-floating energy was still pervasive.

During the middle period of Walden's existence, most of the founders of the school, while remaining actively involved as members of Walden Foundation, stopped teaching and went on to other interests. Perforce the nature of the emphasis in the school underwent a change. The grand performances were replaced by less complex, more improvisational theatre and dance. There developed a greater emphasis on group dynamics, and greater input by the children to the curriculum. The trips to the mountains and deserts remained as important a part of the Walden experience as before, but the artistic experience was now equally shared by group dynamics as energy source.

### **Changing with the times**

By 1965, Walden had grown to the size that it has remained since. We thought a limit of 90 children was consistent with our space, and wanted to keep it at that level. But we hardly ever achieved this number of children. Most years we averaged somewhere between 65 and 90 children. This of course, put increased pressure on us to find sources of income other than that derived from tuition. Although our fees climbed with the general inflation of the economy, annual tuition will have increased from the \$450 a year in 1958 to \$3,150 in 1987/1988. We have always remitted about 10 per cent of the fees for work commitments or economic hardship. As the parent body changed, we saw the solid core of dedicated building craftsmen leave Walden, as their children went on to public upper schools. Although there was still the need for an enormous work commitment on the part of the parents, the talents available were different. For one thing, there was a large increase in single-parent families in Walden, with the difficulties of meeting work and economic commitments. This meant that we were more dependent on fund-raising efforts to keep the school going. Perhaps the greatest

change observable by the 1970s was a loosening of the connection Walden Families had with one another. If the grand performances and the anti-militarist actions of the earlier years had no other effect, it created a strong familial bond that drew us together.

In a recent discussion I had with the present Walden teachers about their perceptions of differences from the earlier days, they thought that the most apparent change was in the nature of the parent body. The radicalism of the 1960s was reflected in the parent body of that time. They felt that today, while none of the Walden Families are conservative or reactionary, they reflect the changes that have taken place in the United States since the 1960s. While most of the parent group at Walden today are liberal in perspective, mostly pacifist, and against involvement in Central American adventurism, they are at the same time more concerned with their economic status than with social issues. They want their children to be high achievers and want Walden to help by emphasising 'the skills' more than it had in past years. Of course this emphasis doesn't represent all the families in Walden, but the teachers feel that it does represent a significant number. The teachers have responded by a greater emphasis on the basic skills, but also believe that there has been little attenuation of the creative atmosphere at Walden. This was borne out by my observations as I sat in on classroom sessions and observed the interplay between children and teachers. In the dance studio, when I sensed the intensity, as the children and their teacher reacted to one another in a spontaneous dance performance, I was filled with a sense of *déjà vu*. Nor has there been a qualitative change in the art studio. Children were still hard at work creating wonderful masks and sculpture from clay, or painting, or working on other constructions. There has been a decrease in the number of long trips taken away from school to the Sierra or the desert, but there are still a multitude of shorter trips during the school year. Day-trips to the museums, the regional parks and nearby wild lands continue. Perhaps the aspect of Walden that has suffered the most with the change of times has been the function of 'Walden as Center'. But this too can change again with changing times, and a new parent body dedicated to a longer-time commitment to Walden — a change that some of the teachers see as starting to happen, with many new families committing themselves to an ongoing connection to Walden.

When I think of Walden functioning for almost 30 years without a director or centralised authority, I'm filled with feelings of both awe and joy. Here is a real affirmation of our anarchist ideas. When I think of all the wonderful, lively, talented children who have attended Walden over the years, of how many of them have become creative, decent, powerful, self-sufficient adults, I can't help but feel that our

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original insights about educating children have been affirmed, and I can't help but feel a great sense of gratification for having been part of the group that created Walden. I think with feelings of great warmth, friendship and respect of that visionary group who were the founders of Walden. Denny and Ida Wilcher, Audrey Goodfriend, Lee and Alan McRae, Stan and MaryLou Gould, and Barbera Moskowitz. I feel grateful for the vision of Paul Williams, who used his money to help groups such as Walden, Black Mountain College, the Living Theater, and the Merce Cunningham Dance Theater. I salute them all, and all the dedicated, energetic, and idealistic teachers and parents who worked together with the founders, to make Walden a reality.

The spirit that created Walden over 30 years ago still exists. One of the teachers recently remarked to me: 'Hopefully Walden will continue to grow and evolve, and perhaps one day when the times more reflect the need, the anarchist pacifist spirit that created Walden will become again its main driving force.'

## *Franklin Rosemont*

### Surrealism in England: Heads or Tails?

Born with high hopes and real promise in the 1930s, surrealism in England seems never to have really 'taken off' — and certainly never to have 'gotten anywhere'. As a collective project of research and subversion, it all too quickly fizzled out, dissolving into a sugar-water eclecticism that has continued to typify so many of its subsequent manifestations.

The well-known political incoherence of the 1930s Surrealist Group in London — its attempt to amalgamate Stalinists, Trotskyists, anarchists, social-democrats, occultists and apolitical artists and writers under a single banner inevitably served only to paralyse all lucid action — was only one symptom of a deeper malaise. With amazingly few and partial exceptions, English surrealists and would-be surrealists seem to have had neither the ability nor even the inclination to take up problems of theory, and therefore of poetry, with anything even close to the rigour they require. Look through even the best of the English surrealist publications — certain issues of *London Bulletin* or *Free Unions* — and you will find constraint, a fear of *going too far*, an insistence on remaining moderate and *respectable* at all costs. Such an attitude, which is to say the least hardly conducive to the surrealist spirit, helps to explain why English surrealism has so little of the richness and fertility of surrealism in, say, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Japan, Romania or the West Indies. There is no one in England even remotely comparable, as theorist or polemicist, to Paul Nougé in Belgium, Karel Teige or Vratislav Effenberger in Prague, Georges Henein or Ramses Younan in Cairo, Shuzo Takiguchi in Japan, the Romanians Luca and Trost, or the Cuban Juan Brea. Those who were recognised as the leading theorists of the English group at its inception in 1935-36 — Herbert Read, David Gascoyne, Hugh Sykes Davies — were no longer in the group at the end of the decade, and, indeed, had by that time moved on to other things.

In matters of theory, the English 'surrealist evidence' is simply not very impressive — some early essays by Robert Melville, brief jottings by Humphrey Jennings, a few pages by Gordon Onslow-Ford, and a few others add up to a rather thin showing. Our good friend Conroy Maddox has offered us fragments of his delightful treatise, *The*



*Exhibitionist's Overcoat*, and a few interesting notes and essays published here and there over the years, but his decisive contributions to surrealism lie elsewhere: in his paintings and collages. The written work of Leonora Carrington is as magnificent as her paintings, but she has lived nearly all her adult life abroad, has never taken part in surrealist activity in the land of her birth, and hence does not truly belong in a discussion of surrealism in England.

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The case of Read is especially instructive. In his essay 'Surrealism and the Romantic Principle' (1936) he expressed the hope that he would one day do for Hegel's *Aesthetics* what Marx had done for the *Logic*. It was an ambitious and suggestive notion, but of course came to nothing. This curious 'anarchist' who was knighted by the Queen, evidently never realised that it takes more than a trunkful of contradictions to develop a dialectic. He may well have been a nice sort of chap and all that, and no doubt meant well, but he was beyond question hopelessly ill-equipped to advance the theory and practice of surrealist revolution. It says a lot about the *quality* of English surrealism that this art critic who, though he sometimes *defended* surrealism, was himself *never a surrealist*, none the less for several years enjoyed a reputation as the best-known spokesman for the movement in England.

Or consider Gascoyne's *First English Surrealist Manifesto* (1935), which is an important document, worth more than all of Read's pronouncements on surrealism put together, despite the fact that only a fragment of it is still extant, and even that only in French translation, the original manuscript having long since been lost. Gascoyne, whose place among the finest English poets of this century is secure, in many respects remains a special case of considerable complexity, fully deserving a close study. Let it suffice here to point out that the implications of his early programmatic text were never followed through by anyone in England. His *Manifesto* mentions, for example, a number of English precursors of surrealism: Swift, Edward Young, 'Monk' Lewis, William Blake, Lewis Carroll. These are indeed figures worthy of surrealists' attention, and had already been cited and in some cases discussed at length by surrealists in France and other countries. There are, of course, a great many more English pre-surrealists who could be mentioned. But one would never guess, from reading English attempts at surrealist publications, especially in recent years, that such forerunners had ever existed. Why have English surrealists shed so little light on the English sources of surrealism?

Other collective projects that might have led to interesting

developments or even to major breakthroughs similarly hit dead-end almost before they started. The Mass-Observation research of the 1930s, to cite but one example, was an exciting series of experiments capable of enriching surrealist perspectives not only in England but internationally. Several English surrealists were actively involved in it from the start, but judging from the London Surrealist Group's publications, it hardly affected the life of the group at all.

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English surrealists have generally blamed traditional English individualism for their failure to sustain a collective venture. But isn't this too simplistic, too one-sided a view? Individualism may be a notorious English vice, but surely it also has its virtues — and in any case just about all that English surrealism has given us has been the contribution of more or less isolated individuals, primarily in the plastic arts and to a lesser extent in poetry. And these individual contributions are by no means inconsiderable. International surrealism has been appreciably reinforced and enhanced by the paintings, collages and objects of Eileen Agar, Conroy Maddox, Grace Pailthorpe, Valentine Penrose, the early 'psychological morphologies' of Onslow-Ford, and others, as well as by the early poetry of Gascoyne.

What is missing from surrealism in England is not surrealists but rather a coherent organised expression of surrealism, in which scattered individuals widely varying in temperament can be guaranteed the fullest autonomy while yet participating in a constant exchange of inspirations and energies allowing each and all to exceed individual limits.

'Individualism' is at most one factor in this lack, which, as I have suggested, is characterised above all by an *indifference to theory* and an overall *timidity*, or reluctance to 'go to extremes'. It is a curious fact: surrealists in the land of William Blake, Kit Smart, Edward Lear and Peter Sellers have tended to justify themselves with an almost apologetic rationalism.

Curious, too, is the fact that some of the most significant English contributions to surrealist thought — or at least to an open-ended, critical, emancipatory thought, inspired by poetry — have come from individuals outside or at best on the fringes of organised surrealist activity. It could be argued, for example, that in the 1940s there was more of the true surrealist spirit in publications of the anarchist Freedom Press than in the official publications of the English surrealists. Marie-Louise Berneri published one of the earliest and most incisive critical appreciations of Wilhelm Reich; she also wrote one of

the best full-length studies of utopias, which includes excellent discussions of the works of Fourier and Sade, and even cites André Breton. Another *Freedom* writer, Philip Sansom, had important things to say on the contemporary relevance of anarchosyndicalism. The black and bitter anti-war cartoons by German-born John Olday have lost none of their cutting edge four decades later. All three of these collaborators on *Freedom* had a hand in the single issue of the surrealist journal *Free Unions*, but they remained active as anarchists rather than as surrealists. It would be interesting to know why they were not more intimately involved in surrealism.

\* \* \*

The disbanding of the Surrealist Group in London in 1947 was merely the formal ratification of a demise that had in fact occurred much earlier. I am far from the first to argue that a surrealist group *properly so-called* has never really existed in England. This view was shared by, among others, Jacques Brunius and E.L.T. Mesens, the French and Belgian surrealists who, in the 1940s, assumed the direction of surrealist activity in London.

After 1947, there seem to have been no attempts to organise surrealist activity in England till the early 1960s, when Brunius and Mesens, at the urging of surrealists in Paris, discussed the possibility of issuing a bulletin (which, however, never appeared). Brunius wrote to me in December 1963 that 'there is *no* surrealist activity in London', and singled out Conroy Maddox, from the adherents of former years, as 'the only one who has remained more or less faithful'. When we met in Paris in 1966, on the occasion of the *L'Ecart Absolu* exhibition, Brunius utterly despaired of any revival of English surrealist activity in the near future. He mentioned Maddox again, but added that there had been no newcomers. He said that Breton was quite irritated with Mesens for his refusal to promote the movement; Brunius himself clearly shared this irritation. Did Mesens, one of surrealism's most splendid poets and collagists, inhibit the development of surrealism in England?

\* \* \*

The various efforts to reanimate collective surrealist activity in England in recent years have thus far proved incapable of overturning the legacy of confusion and defeat. Of the lifeless, inane, trivialised and reactionary versions of 'surrealism' fostered by such quaint little magazines as *Transformation* and *Melmoth*, the less said the better: no one who is passionately attracted to what André Breton regarded as the

cause of poetry, freedom and love would want anything to do with such imbecility.

That a group expression of authentic surrealism will yet resurface in England is virtually certain. English conditions seem ripe and even rotten-ripe for such an intervention, and surrealism is always and everywhere capable of renewal. Even if every self-proclaimed surrealist today suddenly threw in the towel, newcomers would take their places sooner or later. For as long as such things as monarchs, politicians, capitalists, cops, Stalinists, priests, jails, churches, bureaucrats, banks, armies, advertising executives and art critics continue to exist, then surrealism — in one form or another — will also have to exist, not only as the antidote to all these poisons, but also as an indispensable stimulant to carry us beyond all compromise with misery.

★            ★            ★

In such a short space it has of course been impossible to do more than touch on the problems of surrealism in England in the broadest outline. But I would like to conclude with a few words of advice to young people in England who are attracted to surrealism:

Take long walks. Get lost a little. Think about Bugs Bunny. Forget about work, life, success, the past, the future, money, school, duty, writing, seriousness, art, time, politics, television and inquiries on surrealism in England.

Provoke. Eroticise. Defy.

Add insult to injury. Get plenty of sleep. Keep your eyes open. Start from scratch.

Above all, take chances.

Surrealism in England?

Heads or tails?

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**Arthur Moyses**  
**Surrealism in England:**  
**What About Jesus?**

That Franklin Rosemont's personal opinions regarding 'Surrealism in England' is a collective of flaws, faults and — let us dare say it — fallacies he would of course accept, but it is not my purpose in life to sit in judgement on any person or opinion with the exception of mine enemies and statements I know to be wrong. Surrealism is no more than the recording of the undisciplined mind as unrelated acts, opinions, beliefs and suppressed passions pour out and on to the page. It is the mind of the drunkard, the drug-taker or the mentally unstable, therefore it is, always was, and can only be a literary manifestation. Rosemont reluctantly accepts this when he applauds the British writers Swift, Young, Lewis, Blake and Carroll — and let us add Firbank and the murdered Joe Orton, for both these two poured forth on to the page the mind amused and the mind protesting, yet when they lifted their hands from the page they had to hand over to the censorship of the socially disciplined mind, whom they had confessed to, the freedom of the swift flowing hands seeking to record. Surrealism for the intellectual, the historian, the spectator and the media market has always meant the visual arts, for ten seconds with a reproduction can give a greater cachet than the boredom of the printed word. Herein lies the tragedy of Rosemont's aesthetic wrong belief, for the pretty paintings of Dali, Magritte, Tanguy, the films of Buñuel, the sculpture of Duchamp or the collages of Ernst or Schwitters were never the product of the ol' Freudian unconscious mind, but the result of clear rational minds planning each composition with the care of Giotto knocking off the Holy Roman Church commission.

And for the boys the end-product on the ride on that fashionable band-wagon was the fashionable café applause, the plaudits of the spectators, and the love of the art dealers. It was no crime, and over the years they gave much pleasure, but without exception they were all third-rate artists, for as with the abstract, action, pop and punk artists they were offered a gimmick that amuses those seeking to be amused, and they deguttled it to the death. Any good academic artist is able to produce a cubist, abstract, geometrical or fluid, impressionist, social realist, collage or surrealist visual, just as any commercial art agency will daily, on demand, produce work in any of those styles that will,

they believe, sell the product, for like the ol' Victorian Royal Academy subject-matter paintings or the Hitler/Stalin social realism paintings they are invariably second-rate paintings alibied into a temporary historical importance by a phoney emotive subject-matter.

So, too, with Rosemont's curious obsession with anarcho-syndicalism, the arty manifestoes, Hegel and Marx, and poor old Herbert's knighthood for — to quote Leon Trotsky's essay on 'Frying Eggs Under Water' — no matter how you slice a salami it will always end up as crap. Of all those inter-war European pop artists, it is curious that the only one to have any lasting effect from the major surrealist 'Exhibition of Surrealist Objects' mounted by Ratton in Paris in 1936 was and is Mérest Oppenheim's, literally, 'Fur-covered cup, saucer and spoon', for it still has the edge to shock. For the rest, the boys bent with the wind. John Heartfield produced his brilliant anti-Nazi collages, but like any commercial advertising art agency models were photographed and enlarged or reduced to fit with the 'found object'. Max Ernst sat there, as the murdered Joe Orton did many years later, with scissors, paste and pages of illustrations torn from books, and assembled two rational objects to form an irrational picture, and they still give pleasure, but it is no more than a minor art form and only becomes major on the students' college magazine cover. And the myths for the parasitical pseudo-intelligentsia of the gallery art world, and if you drink and talk with me then I applaud you, such as the story we all love of how Max and the boys in Cologne in 1920 organised a Dadist/Surrealist (so who's counting) exhibition in a public shithouse and that the pee persons were handed an axe to destroy any work of art that offended them. But all the surrealist movement lads and lasses were in the end good, solid property-loving citizens, and the axe was chained to a tree trunk and one had to *pass* through that public 'urinal'. Is the story important, Franklin Rosemont? Yes, because it places the whole of the surrealist trivial amusing and happytime art game in its true place in the long history of creative art.

The only time a lavatory was used as a working art gallery was but a year ago or so when a tiny, one at a time, bookshop lavatory inside an anarchist bookshop within walking distance of the Nag's Head pub and the major Whitechapel Art Gallery (free admission on Tuesday afternoons) was turned into a working art gallery. It was a brilliant idea, brilliant in its conception, and it was achieved by the simplicity of placing a sign on the lavatory door stating that within the lavatory was the 'working' art gallery. It meant that for the first time in the history of public art one could sit and pass one's faeces and at the same time share that pleasure by admiring the prints on the loo walls but a few inches away. It was reviewed by an artist of intelligence and imagination,

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abused by the art reviewer in a national magazine, and the prints within that lavatory/art gallery finally received their major accolade when they were physically destroyed by an unknown entrenched authority. Poor ol' Herbert Read received no such honour, Max Ernst and the boys are strictly for the birds, and the dealers' catalogues as the 'fashion' finds a new giggle, but that lonely lavatory in Whitechapel about the Nag's Head pub must now be accepted as one of the major milestones in the history of European art. What do you think, Franklin?

What about Jesus? Well, what about Jesus?

## Geoffrey Ostergaard

### Indian Anarchism

#### The case of Vinoba Bhave — Anarchist ‘Saint of the Government’

By ‘Indian Anarchism’ I mean the movement which was inspired by Mohandas Gandhi and which, after his assassination in 1948, was led by Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan until their own deaths in 1982 and 1979, respectively. Whether this self-styled Sarvodaya (‘welfare of all’) movement and its ideology should be classified as anarchist is disputable. The issue is usually debated with reference to Gandhi, but here I focus on his successor. I do so partly because Vinoba’s ideas deserve to be better known in the West, partly because his anarchism is in some ways more explicit than Gandhi’s, and partly because of an extraordinary incident in his career which calls sharply into question the nature of his anarchism.

The incident occurred in 1975 shortly after Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister, imposed on the country emergency rule which amounted, at best, to a constitutional dictatorship. Asked what he thought of the Emergency, Vinoba, who was in the middle of observing a year of self-imposed silence, made a written comment: ‘an era of discipline’. The comment was widely used in the Government’s propaganda to suggest that Vinoba endorsed the Emergency. Thus, the man who had been hailed as an anarchist saint was projected in the paradoxical role of ‘the Saint of the Government’ — and a very dubious Government at that.

The background to this incident must be briefly sketched. Although Gandhi had led the Indian struggle for national liberation, his objective was the development of India not as a modern industrial nation state but as a society of self-governing village republics. To this end, he proposed, on the very eve of his assassination, that the Indian National Congress should disband as a political party and be reconstituted as a constructive work organisation whose task would be to help the Indian masses, 80 per cent of whom lived in the villages, to achieve ‘real independence’. Predictably, Gandhi’s ‘political heir’, Nehru, rejected the proposal but, shortly afterwards, Vinoba, Gandhi’s ‘spiritual heir’, emerged to carry forward Gandhi’s uncompleted mission. This he did by re-organising Gandhi’s true followers, who were not the politicians but the few thousand workers engaged in Gandhi’s Constructive Programme, the best-known item in which was the revival of *khadi*



(handspun, handwoven cloth) as a village industry. Through a new organisation, the Sarva Seva Sangh (Association for the Service of All), Vinoba launched in 1951 a campaign to achieve a 'land revolution' by means of Bhoodan — gifts of land to landless labourers — and later, and more radically, by Gramdan — the voluntary villagisation of land. In distributing over one million acres of land to half-a-million landless labourers, the movement achieved some success at the practical level but rather more at the propaganda level. By 1969 the Sarvodaya movement could claim that 140,000 of India's villages had declared themselves in favour of the Gramdan idea.

However, when in the early 1970s the movement set about translating the idea into reality, it began to flounder. In the ensuing crisis, Jayaprakash Narayan, the former Socialist Party leader who had joined Sarvodaya in 1954, revised Vinoba's strategy of nonviolent revolution. In place of peaceful persuasion and the consensual building of an 'alternative society', JP (as he is usually called) emphasised nonviolent struggle of the kind used by Gandhi against the British Raj and 'the politicalisation of the movement'.

Vinoba and some 10 per cent of the workers opposed the new strategy, so a split resulted. Nevertheless, the bulk of the Sarvodaya workers joined JP in an attempt to apply the new strategy. They transformed what otherwise might have been one more ephemeral student agitation in the Northern State of Bihar into a 'people's movement' for what JP termed 'Total Revolution'. Through a remarkable campaign directed at mobilising all the forces opposed to Mrs Gandhi's Congress, JP brought the movement to the centre of India's political stage and, as a result, the hegemony of Congress rule was seriously challenged for the first time since Independence. In a series of mass demonstrations over a period of fifteen months, 'student power' and 'people's power' were pitted against 'State power'. The situation became increasingly revolutionary, and in Bihar attempts were made through the struggle committees to establish a system of parallel 'people's self-government'.

Then, in June 1975, the confrontation reached a dramatic climax. A new, more repressive state of emergency, on top of an existing one, was declared; JP and other opposition leaders were jailed; and the 'people's movement' was suppressed. The Emergency served only to deepen the split in the Sarvodaya movement. While many of their erstwhile colleagues were in jail, the minority of workers who looked to Vinoba for guidance rushed to support Mrs Gandhi's twenty-point programme of social reform — her sweetener to the bitter pill of emergency rule.

The questions that call for an answer are: How and why did Vinoba come to take the position of apparently legitimising the Emergency?

And what light does his behaviour throw on the nature of his anarchism and of Indian anarchism generally? But first it is necessary to indicate Vinoba's anarchist credentials.

As evidence of these, what could be clearer than his statement: 'My main idea is that the whole world ought to be set free from the burden of its governments...If there is a disease from which the entire world suffers, it is this disease called government?'<sup>1</sup> Again, referring to the state in the context of the nuclear arms race, he pointed out that the state had now become 'all-powerful with the power of destroying the whole world'. People therefore talked of putting a stop to the production of nuclear weapons and destroying existing ones. But, he went on, 'It is an illusion to hope to limit or restrict or regulate the power of violence of the modern state. The only rational and sensible alternative is to understand that humanity can exist only when it discards violent weapons and accepts the ideal of building up a society in which there is no coercive state.'<sup>2</sup>

But anarchism involves more than principled rejection of the institution of government or the state: it implies also distinctive views on matters such as leadership, organisation, authority and politics. On all of these, Vinoba's position was recognisably anarchist. Vinoba inherited, so to speak, Gandhi's mantle, but he was no blind follower of his guru. He advised those constructive workers whose first thought when faced with a problem was, 'What did Gandhi do or say in such a situation?', to 'forget Gandhi', to think for themselves, and to have the courage to make new experiments on their own account.<sup>3</sup>

Practising his own advice, Vinoba was no 'Gandhian', in the sense of someone who invokes the authority of Gandhi to justify his own actions. Like Gandhi, whose concept of Satyagraha means, literally, 'holding fast to Truth', Vinoba searched for Truth, and it was Truth, not any particular person's relative version of it, which carried the stamp of authority. Vinoba, of course, learned much from Gandhi, but he took from him only those ideas that appealed to him, leaving aside those that did not. Those which he took, he imbibed, so that they became in effect his own. Hence, as he put it, 'I am a man of my own ideas'.<sup>4</sup> The clear implication was that others should do so likewise, even with regard to Vinoba's ideas. People, he believed, should not accept even a moral authority without thinking out the matter for themselves. 'I don't want you to accept what I say without understanding it...Take my ideas only if you approve of them'.<sup>5</sup>

In common parlance, Vinoba was the undisputed leader of the Sarvodaya movement for over twenty years. But leadership came to him, not he to it: leadership, so to say, was thrust upon him — as he saw it, by God, who in 1951 had sent a talisman in the shape of the first



*John Neve, master of disguise.*



*Eugen Mendel.*



*Franz Josef Ehrhart.*



*Photograph of Neve that Nettlau identified in 1938 as Joseph Lane.*



*Victor Dave.*



*Johann Most.*



*Josef Peukert.*



*Karl Theodore Reuss.*



*Vinoba Bhave.*

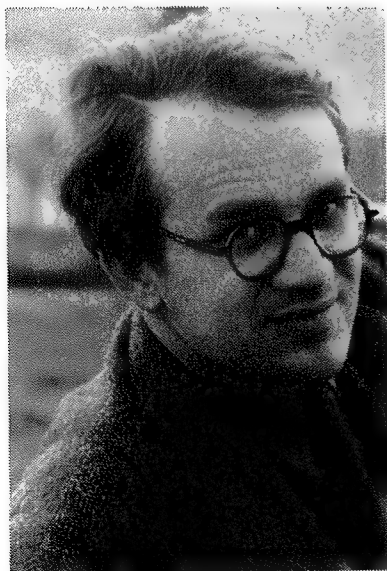


*J.P. Narayan*



*Police attacking a meeting addressed by JP in 1974.*

*Benjamin Tucker.*



*George Woodcock.*



WAR WAR.

PHILIP SANSOM.



# ADDRESS

*To the Heroes and Martyrs of the Commune, on their Restoration to  
Citizenship, after Eight Years of Proscription.*

## FROM THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS OF LONDON.

CITIZENS AND BRETHREN,

*In the name of the Universal Republic,*

We send you our heartiest congratulations upon your release from the vile regime of a-convict settlement, and return to the arena of your mighty effort in behalf of the Universal Republic, Democratic and Social.

We rejoice at the withering of the reactionary hand, which since the iniquitous suppression of the Commune has held you prostrate and powerless to pursue the mission you heroically accepted in 1871—the Realization of the Social Republic, the Supremacy of Labour, the Reign of Humanity. Eight years have passed since your majestic effort was made to prove that government by, for, all alone has the right of existence, or can evoke the capacity to initiate such organic reforms as must precede true civilization.

We witnessed your masterly organization of the Commune and your noble sacrifices to preserve its existence. We rejoiced at the spirit in which you sought to solve the pressing problems which surrounded you on all sides, which confronted you at each step.

We marvelled at the rapidity with which numerous committees were formed to deal with the vital subjects of labour organization, finance, education, and other pressing matters.

We read with a glow of fraternal satisfaction your grand decrees relating to the separation of Church and State; the abolition of death punishment; the project for liquidating the war indemnity without cursing future generations with an interest-bearing debt for the benefit of money-speculators; the abolition of conscription, and the banishment of a standing army from Paris that the genius of her citizens might in peace work out the decrees of justice and secure the triumph of social liberty. Resplendent was the spectacle of the Commune. It was the embodiment of order; it arose out of the chaos of disrupted society. Its name was liberty, its substance was liberty, its purpose was political and industrial justice. The first of its kind it will have been the destined forerunner of a multitude of Communes, which in the order of progress shall constitute the Universal Republic. In all history no example so grand is presented as the Commune waging a colossal struggle for existence at the challenge of a malignant and overwhelming power. Alas, it was thrown to the ground, yet in all future times it will be the admitted glory of France. That Paris was the birthplace of the first Commune will be to her an everlasting crown of honour, more glorious than all her triumphs of peace and war in all preceding generations.

The capitalists of Europe dreaded the effect of its existence. They foresaw that a government emanating from the working classes, and guarding the sacred interests of labour, would wield unconsciously a moral force so great that social injustice everywhere would perish at its approach. They well knew that their domination stood foredoomed, and that no organization of force how-

ever large, could greatly prolong it in the presence of one community, where justice ennobled by liberty, ensured the means of happiness to all citizens.

With burning indignation we witnessed the atrocious acts of the fell conspirators of Versailles, who exercising usurped power at the instigation of corrupt interests, gathered together hordes of savage and infuriated homicides with the avowed intention of drowning the Commune in its own blood. We saw those hordes hurled against devoted Paris, and we marked day by day and week by week, the prosecution of the liberticidal policy, and its accomplishment through the instrumentality of artillery, bayonet, and sword. We stood aghast with horror as we witnessed the intrusions of the barbarous legions, and ultimately by force most foul and treachery most infamous, your subjection, amidst massacres of men, women, and children, the like of which even the dread annals of war seldom record.

Brethren, we shared with you the mental pangs of that hideous time—we sorrowed at your every suffering, and grieved at the calamities your devotion entailed upon you. We protested most publicly against the monstrous calumnies with which the capitalist press of England and Europe sought to overwhelm you, as a fraudulent justification for wreaking their diabolical vengeance. We traced the course of that vengeful spirit—how it glared at the executions on the plains of Satory, how it dragged you to the galleys and immured you in dungeons. We saw you hunted over the world, followed by shanders and charged with crimes. All these are recorded, and shall not be forgotten. Your sacrifices are cherished in our memories. You have been hated and condemned—not for any crime, but for your virtues and courage. Your sacrifices and sufferings have not been in vain, for the principles of the Commune live and spread—they were not suppressed with the Commune—they have become rooted in every nation, and, nourished by the blood of martyrs, will yet blend all peoples in numerous communes, and effect universal solidarity.

Accept, Citizens of the Universal Republic, the heartfelt congratulations of the Social Democrats of London. May the smiles of a happy future efface the memories of past suffering, and may you—one and all—live to aid, in peaceful security, the redemption of labour from subjection to bourgeois exploiters, traffickers in loans and wars, and the domination of commercial vampires. While rejoicing at your liberation, let us not for one day forget your fellow victims still dragging out a miserable existence in degradation and exile. May the infamy of keeping them longer in chains be brought home to those men whose professions of liberty, equality, and fraternity make doubly infamous and cowardly the crime of longer incarcerating some of France's noblest sons. May we soon see the remaining heroes of the Commune called back to enjoy the rights of citizenship amidst the acclamations of all enlightened and just men.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CLUB, ENGLISH SECTION } 6, RUSSELL ST.  
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CLUB, GERMAN SECTION } SOHO.  
WESTMINSTER DEMOCRATIC CLUB.  
TOWER HAMLETS RADICAL ASSOCIATION.

PATRIOTIC CLUB.  
LAMBETH REFORM UNION.  
FEDERAL WORKMAN'S LEAGUE.  
MANHOOD SUFFRAGE LEAGUE.

and other Associations, including the  
MIDLAND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ASSOCIATION, Birmingham.

May, 1879.

# English Edition of FREIHEIT

ISSUED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE ENGLISH SECTION, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CLUB.

THE "Liberal" Government of England, with Mr. Gladstone—defender of the Neapolitan Prisoners, and champion of the Bulgarians—as Prime Minister, have yielded to the demands of the English Court party and the Jingo Press, and have joined in the International persecution of the Social Democratic Party.

The *Freiheit* has been seized in London, and its editor thrown into prison, while the plant, papers, and moneys—the property of a Working Men's Society—have been pillooned by Her Majesty's "Liberal" Government.

The death of the Czar, and the attitude of the Social Democratic Party in regard to that event, have afforded a long-sought-for pretext to reverse the traditional policy of England in affording an asylum to political refugees, whether Royalist or Revolutionist. We are confident that the English people will never be a party to such a policy, and that the design has only to be exposed in order to ensure its defeat. It is said that the Socialists have made this country a base of operations against States with which we are at peace. When Chislehurst became at once an asylum for Imperialist refugees and a centre whence they directed their conspiracies against the lives and liberties of the French people; when Carlism established its Committees in England, and obtained its arms and finances from here, did we hear these protests? These were the Royalist conspirators, who, in the pursuit of their ends, caused thousands of human lives to be sacrificed, and rivers of human blood to flow.

We are the working class agitators for a change in the condition of society; hence our property is seized and our leader thrown into prison in this country—hitherto the asylum of the persecuted—by a professedly "Liberal" Government, at the dictation of foreign despots.

One man has met his death in Russia, and forthwith the English Press urges the Government to copy the tactics of foreign despots by arbitrary and illegal actions. Side by side with their expressions of horror at the event in Russia, and their general outcry against the Socialist Party, are to be found articles advocating the continuance of the bloody and shameful wars in which thousands of the flower of our population have been uselessly slain. If the working classes read the records of past and pending labour struggles here, they will find the same Press pursuing the course of misrepresentation and libel, whereby it strives to the present crisis to alienate the sympathies of English workmen from their foreign brethren.

The Continental working classes have to work out their political and social redemption, in the face of fearful odds, with the combined forces of despotism arrayed against them. Exile, the knout, the bludgeon, bayonet, and chains, together with various forms of mental torture, are the chief weapons in the hands of those who seek to keep humanity at a standstill. Let who uses these forces upon the minds and limbs of the people—be he Czar, Kaiser, or statesman—be prepared for the consequences.

The English Court, through its marital alliances, especially with Russia, is tinged with the characteristics of the foreign autocracies, and already this influence has caused the Government to adopt a shameful course. Knowing the answer which was given to the same party when its efforts were used to procure the placing of an Imperialist effigy in Westminster Abbey, we confidently await the answer of the English people to this attempt to suppress the liberty of the Press at the instigation of foreign Powers.

F. KITZ

T. W. SOUTTER

D. CLARK

C. MURRAY

H. W. ROWLANDS

F. LORD

B. PLANT

EDWIN DUNN

Provisional Committee  
for Defence of "*Freiheit*,"  
who are prepared to receive  
subscriptions. Office—8,  
Rose Street, Soho.

On Sunday a Public Meeting, convened by the English Section of the Social Democratic Club, will be held at Eleven O'Clock, at Rose Street, Soho, also a Mass Meeting on Clerkenwell Green.

## OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

GLOBE, APRIL 1.

THIS *Freiheit* has been found obnoxious, and is, if possible, to be proved criminal, not at the instigation of the Russian Government, nor merely on account of having instigated to murder, but upon the very different charge of stirring subjects of a foreign State to sedition and rebellion, and at the instance of the German authorities. We are thus compelled to look upon the case as political in its nature, and to compare it with some cases of good deal nearer home. For if inciting foreign subjects to rebel is a crime in the case of the *Freiheit*, why and how can it be deemed perfectly lawful for English newspapers to do the same thing, as was the case only a few months ago when Turkish subjects were exhorted most vigorously to rebel against their rulers? Independently, however, of these considerations, the step now taken is one of exactly the kind which Englishmen most disapprove. It is an unusual interference with the liberty of the Press, undertaken, as every one must feel perfectly sure, under dictation from a foreign Power. The case is not dissimilar from that which led to the overthrow of Lord Palmerston when to the plenitude of his power. The Orsini conspiracy was hatched in England, and the French exercised what pressure they could to secure the punishment of the conspirators by the English Government. But in that case Lord Palmerston proceeded in the far more constitutional way of proposing a Bill for punishing conspiracies of the kind. He was beaten over this, and driven from office. But in this instance it is not the case of a Bill presented to Parliament. The machinery of the State has, without a word of explanation, or any appeal either to the Legislature or to public feeling, been put in motion against a newspaper for doing that which was allowed over and over again to be done by English editors when a rebellion was going on in another foreign State.

BIRMINGHAM DAILY POST.

If the prosecution should succeed, nothing will have been gained, for the journal itself cannot be suppressed in consequence, if there are others prepared to carry it on. If the prosecution should fail—and this is quite possible—then the "party of disorder" would have scored a victory at the expense of the English Government. There are palpable reasons against the prosecution. There are others of still greater weight. We say frankly that, we do not relish the notion of a Government prosecution against a newspaper on account of the speculative opinions it may express. In case of treason or sedition at home such a proceeding might become necessary; but surely, when Irish "Nationalist" papers have been allowed to preach sedition unchecked, and when an American paper which openly advocates rebellion in Ireland is allowed to pass through the British Post Office, it is very like swallowing a camel and straining at a gnat to select this wretched little refugee print as the object of a State prosecution.

DAILY NEWS.

A GOVERNMENT prosecution appears to us, to say the very least, of questionable expediency. That such a proceeding may excite the gravest popular distrust we need not waste time in arguing. The fate of Lord Palmerston, when he attempted to carry his Conspiracy to Murder Bill through the House of Commons, cannot have been already forgotten. It is true that there is nothing novel in Russia or elsewhere to correspond with the viewpoint of the French colonels which had then become notorious. But the English people do not like such trials as those of Feller in 1803 and Lherminier in 1858. It is not fond of seeing its judicial machinery put in motion at the instance of a foreign Power.

PALL MALL GAZETTE, MARCH 31.

APART from the technical legal difficulties in the way of a prosecution of the *Freiheit*, on which we may have much to say on another day, it is evoked, like all other Press prosecutions, to the possibility of mis-arriving, in which case the only result of interference is to make matters worse. The journal comes off with flying colours, the Government is worried, a stimulus is given to the propaganda which the prosecution was intended to discourage, and in such a case as that under discussion a very disagreeable impression is created abroad. But what would be the result of the most successful crusade against the *Freiheit* and its contemporaries? New York is only a few days' distant from Liverpool, and many Nihilists, including one of the editors of the revolutionary *Yerod*, are there already. A Nihilist Committee drew up the other day, "in the name of humanity," an address in a flowery beehive, which exhorted the workmen of Russia to "kill, destroy, assassinate, annihilate, even to the very germ, your aristocracy;" and as it is almost as easy now-a-days to issue a newspaper as to draw up an address, the *Freiheit*, if banished from London, would speedily reappear in America, and furnish from New York anathemas against the modern State which would be forbidden in London.

ECCHO.

AT the monthly meeting of the General Council of Radical Workmen's Clubs and Associations, held last evening at the Westminster Free-trade Club, 2 and 4, Chapter Street, W. Mr. G. Howe in the chair, it was moved by Mr. C. Makin, seconded by Mr. G. Morgan, "That this meeting, hearing of the arbitrary arrest of the editor and seizure of the plant of the *Freiheit*, do hereby appoint two delegates to watch the proceedings connected therewith, and to report back at a special meeting of the above." This was carried unanimously.

\*. In consequence of the action of the Government this is issued in its present form. The next number will appear as a regular Journal.

land gift. But, basically, he rejected the principle of leadership. In a paradoxical but typical expression of this rejection, he said that his kind of leadership could succeed only by demonstrating its failure. Only when he had ceased to be the leader and his erstwhile followers had become their own leaders, could he be said to have succeeded. 'Not success but failure is my aim', he declared. 'I never had the sense of being a leader of a movement. No leader would desire failure. A leader has hardly any colleagues; he has only followers. I desire failure, and success to my colleagues.'<sup>6</sup>

One would have to search hard, I think, to find any other leader of a social movement who was so anxious to eradicate the lust for power, not least that buried in his own breast. In this respect, Vinoba was more anarchistic than either Gandhi or JP after him. Thus, when JP accepted the invitation of the Bihar students to lead their agitation, he made clear that he would not agree to be 'a leader in name only': 'I will take the advice of all, of the students, the people, the struggle committees. But the decisions will be mine and you will have to accept them'<sup>7</sup> — an attitude reminiscent of Gandhi's occasionally dictatorial attitude towards the Congress.

Vinoba's attitude towards leadership was combined with a characteristically anarchist attitude towards organisations. Although anarchists are not opposed to organisation as such, only certain types of organisation are compatible with anarchism — those that are small-scale, radically decentralised, fluid and informal. Formal organisations pose problems for anarchists because, analysed sociologically, they are made up of, not concrete, whole and unique individuals but abstract bits of standardised human beings, namely, roles and statuses. In formal organisations, persons play roles and occupy different (superordinate and subordinate) statuses, to the latter of which authority is attached according to certain norms. Thus, formal organisation is the real source of authority — of the type Max Weber called 'rational-legal', as distinct from 'traditional' and 'charismatic'. So, who says formal organisation, says authority. And, as Robert Michels further pointed out, 'Who says organisation, says oligarchy'.

Vinoba's suspicion of formal organisation was not expressed in these terms, but it was voiced frequently. He was fond of quoting Saint Francis's injunction: 'Do not get yourself entangled in organisations'; and he advised Sarvodaya workers not to get 'imprisoned' in their institutions.<sup>8</sup>

A vivid demonstration of Vinoba's attitude occurred in 1956 when, almost overnight, he liquidated the committees that had been formed in the wake of the Bhoodan campaign.<sup>9</sup> The idea was that the movement should achieve freedom from both organisational control and reliance

on financial donations as it developed into the stage of becoming a self-activating 'people's movement', as distinct from 'a movement of workers for the people'. The decision proved premature: the movement did not become a genuine 'people's movement' and, in its absence, the Sarva Seva Sangh developed its own organisations at the provincial and local levels. But the failure of the decision to work out the way intended, and the subsequent compromise, in no way changed Vinoba's basic attitude towards organisations.

The Sarva Seva Sangh, under Vinoba's guidance, adopted the basic rule that all decisions should be taken either unanimously (all members positively agreeing) or by consensus (no members actively disagreeing). Decision-making by unanimity consensus is the only mode fully consistent with anarchism. What R.P. Wolff calls 'unanimous direct democracy' is the only solution to the problem of reconciling the conflict between authority — the right to command — and the moral autonomy of the individual.<sup>10</sup>

A principle of anarchism, reflecting the latter, is the sovereignty of the individual. Although sovereign individuals may *in fact* conform to, and in that sense, obey the command of others, they do not acknowledge the *right* of others to command obedience: obeying their own consciences is the supreme norm. When sovereign individuals act in concert, formulating rules for themselves or taking decisions, the rules and decisions can be authoritative only if all agree or, at least, none disagrees. What usually passes as self-government is nothing of the kind. As Vinoba put it, 'If I am under some other person's command, where is my self-government? Self-government means ruling your own self. It is the one mark of *swaraj* (self-rule) not to allow any outside power in the world to exercise control over oneself. And the second mark of *swaraj* is not to exercise power over any others. These two things together make *swaraj*: no submission and no exploitation.'<sup>11</sup>

It can be argued that, until his semi-retirement in 1969, Vinoba, the charismatic leader, was in practice the effective decision-maker in the Sarva Seva Sangh — even though he was not a member of it. But the unanimity rule made the Sangh, at least theoretically, an anarchist organisation. And the rule also had important consequences when the split occurred in 1974-75. The minority faction prevented the Sangh, as an organisation, coming out in favour of the agitation in Bihar: those workers who joined JP there, did so only in their individual capacities. Since 1978 the Sangh has become the exclusive organisation of those workers who follow JP's line, and the unanimity rule has been modified to permit decisions if 80 per cent of members are in favour. As a consequence, it has become a *less* anarchistic organisation, even if there is also greater emphasis than in the past on 'collective leadership'.

In the anarchist tradition (unlike the Marxist), organisations that carry forward the movement prefigure the desired future society. In insisting that the Sangh should abide by the unanimity/consensus principle, Vinoba was applying to the organisation an approach which he saw as applicable to political organisation and life generally. In broad terms, Vinoba made two major and related contributions to the theory and practice of nonviolence. One was an elaboration of the concept of Satyagraha which, he argued, should be interpreted positively to mean nonviolent *assistance* in right thinking, rather than nonviolent *resistance* to evil. The other was elaboration of a 'new politics' — the politics of the people, as distinct from the politics of the state.

The hallmark of genuine Satyagraha, he suggested, is its non-coercive quality, its capacity to convert opponents without arousing their fears. The emphasis on non-coercion and conversion reflects Vinoba's respect for the sovereignty of the individual. To the extent that an individual is coerced and not converted, his/her sovereignty is abrogated. Although he was not always consistent in the matter, and was prepared to compromise, it is clear that Vinoba wished to dispense with *all* coercion, including moral as well as physical coercion. In that sense, he was the 'purest' of anarchists; and likewise, he favoured the 'purest' form of satyagraha. Those who practise satyagraha, he believed, should express truth but they should not insist on their own relative truth: they should leave it to truth itself to make its presence felt.

Vinoba's second major contribution is also basically anarchistic, as is suggested by the term 'politics of the people', contrasted with 'politics of the State'. The politics of the State is defined in terms of power, in the sense of the capacity to get one's way with others despite their resistance, using methods ranging from manipulation through force to naked violence. Such a conception of politics, he argued in effect, can have no place in a society which accords primacy to the values of truth and love (positive nonviolence). This kind of politics must, therefore, be transcended: the politics of power must give way to the politics of truth and love. Power in the usual sense — as distinct from the essentially spiritual capacity or strength to express truth and love in one's relations to others — is antithetical to truth and love and must, therefore, be rejected. As Vinoba put it, 'The only way to bring peace is to renounce power... We want to eliminate the craving for power from the minds of men.'<sup>12</sup>

In developing his concept of 'the politics of the people', Vinoba rejected a basic assumption of the old politics, namely, that human beings have different and incompatible interests. On this assumption, conflict and competition are inevitable and become the hallmarks of

'the politics of the state'. In democratic states, conflict and competition are institutionalised in the party system. Sarvodaya, however, with its metaphysical belief in the unity of humankind, makes the directly contrary assumption: 'Sarvodaya means that the good of all resides in the goods of one'; hence, it assumes that the interests of human beings are fundamentally harmonious, not antagonistic.<sup>13</sup> It follows that the hallmarks of 'the new politics' are consensus and co-operation. To realise it, party democracy must give way to partyless democracy. And, since all human beings may be deemed to express part of the whole truth, decisions arrived at by consensus and through co-operation provide the surest guarantee that the politics of truth and love, not the politics of power, is being practised.

In seeking to implement 'the new politics', Vinoba chose the path followed by Western anarchists, although in his case the signpost was provided by Gandhi's proposal that the Congress should be disbanded and Gandhi's advice to constructive workers to keep out of politics. India's nonviolent revolutionaries, Vinoba argued, should not form a party, they should not participate in elections, and they should not seek to capture State power. Instead, the people should be encouraged to take direct action, in the broadest sense of that term.

In Vinoba's speeches, Indian echoes of the classical controversy between anarchists and Marxists in the First International can be heard. 'No revolutionary thought', he declared, 'has ever been propagated through the power of the state.'<sup>14</sup> 'If it was possible to effect a real revolution through the power of the state, would Gautama Buddha have renounced the throne?...Buddhism started to lose ground in the country from the time it became associated with state power. The same thing happened when Christianity got the support of the Roman emperors....State power is a conservative force....It may bring about some social reforms, but it cannot radically alter the lives of the people.'<sup>15</sup>

Like other anarchists, Vinoba was accused of running away from politics and denying their importance. Not so, he responded. His policy was deliberately chosen and based on 'stark realism'.<sup>16</sup> 'The whole idea of ruling is wrong'; but one could not get rid of ruling by becoming oneself a ruler. If he, Vinoba, were to occupy the seat of power, he would find himself behaving in much the same way as the present incumbents. 'Those who get themselves involved in the machinery of power politics, even for the purpose of destroying it, are bound to fail in their purpose. To destroy it, you have to stay out of it. If you want to cut down a tree, it is no use to climb into its branches. The desire to keep contact with something, even to destroy it, is a subtle and insidious illusion.'<sup>17</sup> And Vinoba was as scathing as any Western

anarchist about the Marxist prediction of the ultimate arrival, via the proletarian State, of a stateless society. The Marxists were 'anarchists in the final stage' but 'totalitarians in the first stage'; their 'stateless society is only a promissory note but state tyranny is cash down'.<sup>18</sup> Sarvodaya, therefore, stood for the immediate reduction in the power of the state.

Like Western anarchists, too, Vinoba criticised not only Marxists but democratic socialists who employ the machinery of the State to effect social change. After independence, India had become a representative democracy, but it was not real self-government — that existed nowhere in the world. The representatives were the real masters: the people were masters in name only; they were slaves in reality.<sup>19</sup> Voting is a farce; real power remains in the hands of the few; 'the whole arrangement in fact is sheer bogus.' In some respects, the situation in the new State was worse than in the old. The latter was not a 'Welfare State', so there were some sides of life with which it did not interfere. But the new State was a 'Welfare State', and the result was 'frightening': 'The government plans for every part of the nation's work.... The people are completely passive, they are a mere protectorate — in fact, they are nothing but a flock of sheep.' It all made Vinoba 'wonder whether August 15, 1947, should be called Independence Day or Dependence Day'.

In the light of this evidence of Vinoba's anarchism, how could such a man come to be seen, during the Emergency in 1975, as 'the Saint of the Government'?

In answering this question, the first point to note is that the phrase Vinoba actually used in commenting on the Emergency was *Anushashan parva*. Mrs Gandhi's supporters translated this as 'an era of discipline', implying that Vinoba approved the Government's authoritarian measures. But when he broke his year-long silence on Christmas Day 1975, Vinoba explained that *Anushashan parva* referred to the discipline laid down by *acharyas* (traditional teachers and men of wisdom) in ancient times to guide their pupils.<sup>20</sup> It was to be distinguished from *Shashan*, or rule enforced by the state. However, in making this belated clarification, Vinoba expressed confidence that the Government 'would do nothing to go against the discipline of the acharyas'. Hence, there was no need for Satyagraha in the form of nonviolent resistance against the Government and — by implication — the Satyagraha then being conducted by the opposition in protest at the Emergency was mistaken.

It should also be noted that Vinoba then proceeded to convene a conference of *acharyas*, which included vice-chancellors, professors and retired judges, and which unanimously called for a speedy return to 'normalcy'. When that advice was ignored by Mrs Gandhi, Vinoba himself, shortly afterwards, announced that he would engage in Satyagraha. But the proposed action — a fast unto death — was over an

issue which showed a bizarre sense of priorities. The issue was not the continuance of the Emergency beyond any semblance of justification, not the drastic amendment of the Indian Constitution designed to establish executive autocracy, nor even the plight of the victims of Sanjay Gandhi's ruthless campaign for 'voluntary', but in practice often compulsory, sterilisation. The issue, rather, was the legal enforcement of cow protection! The cow, of course, is a sacred animal to the Hindus, although Vinoba explained that his motivation was not religious sectarianism; for him the cow symbolised the rural economy and beyond that the unity between human and animal life.

Vinoba's proposed fast was called off when Mrs Gandhi made moves to accommodate his wishes. The incident served to show that he was not quite 'the Saint of the Government' he had been thought to be. But there is no avoiding the conclusion that Vinoba's stance throughout the Emergency was exceedingly dubious and ambiguous, not merely from a revolutionary but also from a liberal democratic perspective.

Can his stance be explained as a case of an anarchist 'going soft' in his old age? His anarchist statements certainly became fewer as he grew older and as, after 1969, he concentrated more on spiritual matters. But he continued to express anarchist sentiments. In 1980, for example, he expressed more firmly than ever before his opposition to voting in parliamentary elections.<sup>21</sup>

Is the answer to be found, then, in personal relationships? Was he, perhaps, not so much 'the Saint of the Government' as 'the Saint of Mrs Gandhi'? There may be some truth in this suggestion. He certainly had a fondness for the Nehru family. He regarded Nehru as his 'brother' and believed (contrary to much evidence) that Nehru was trying to carry on Gandhi's work. He was also very conscious, so it would seem, that Gandhi had designated Nehru as his 'political heir', leaving the position of 'spiritual heir' open to Vinoba — a decision which suggested a division of labour between the two successors. Vinoba's general attitude towards Nehru he transferred to Nehru's daughter, and the politically astute Mrs Gandhi carefully cultivated and exploited the relationship. But, although Vinoba can be criticised for allowing himself, without protest, to be used by Mrs Gandhi, I do not think that his personal regard for her is the really important factor in explaining his stance.

The real clue to the paradoxical — and not entirely accurate — puzzle of Vinoba, the anarchist 'Saint of the Government', is to be found in Vinoba's philosophy, including the anarchistic aspects of it. In a famous speech made in 1916, Gandhi, referring to India's violent revolutionaries, declared that he, too, was an anarchist. He then added, significantly, 'but of another type'.<sup>22</sup> Indian anarchism is not Western



anarchism in India. It is different from mainstream Western anarchism, and some of these differences have important consequences.

Leaving aside the more obvious differences, such as Indian anarchism's commitment to principled nonviolence and its religious or spiritual basis,<sup>23</sup> three should be noted.

The first is that Indian anarchism is 'gradualist', whereas Western anarchism is 'immediatist'. Both assume that it is possible for humans to live an ordered existence without the State, but Western anarchists add that it is possible for them to do so *now*. In an extreme form, this addition leads to the Bakuninist theory of spontaneous revolution. To achieve anarchy, all that is really necessary is for the oppressed masses, inspired by heroic revolutionaries, to rise in revolt and throw off the artificial chains of the state: 'natural society' in the form of free association and communities will then emerge and be linked in a federal network. In contrast, Indian anarchism believes that anarchy will be realised only when all, or at least the great bulk of, human beings develop the degree of self-discipline that at present only some of them possess. (The 'some' include common-or-garden saints as well as Saints!) Humanity evolves, subduing as it progresses the animal side of its nature until its divine nature is fully revealed. In political terms, this evolution is from a condition of 'no government', where chaos reigns, through 'good government' to, ultimately, 'freedom from government' — the situation where people, having internalised moral norms, obey them of their own accord.<sup>24</sup>

Referring to modern India, Vinoba distinguished three stages of political development: first, an independent central government; second, the decentralised, increasingly self-governed, state; and, third, the stage of pure anarchy. In 1947 India had reached the first stage. The second stage had thus begun and would (or should) be marked by 'the process of dissolving power' (or, to put it in another way, distributing power to the villages and developing the institutions of 'the new politics', such as partyless democracy). This process, he thought, 'may well take us fifty years, but a beginning at least must be made today'.<sup>25</sup> Because they are 'gradualists', Indian anarchists talk, not as Western anarchists have usually done, about 'abolishing the State' but, as theoretical Marxists do, about 'the withering away of the State'. They also have a different attitude towards government legislation and are prepared to countenance, and even to promote actively, certain laws — for example, those promoting decentralisation and those, such as prohibition and banning cow slaughter, which are perceived as expressive of the moral law.

The second difference may be stated thus: whereas Western anarchism is 'anti-statist', Indian anarchism might more aptly be

characterised as 'non-statist'. As Western anarchists see it, the State may have been 'necessary' in the past, but the modern State — each and every State — lacks all legitimacy. Lacking legitimacy, the force that it exercises is perceived as violence, morally indistinguishable from the violence that others may exercise. Violent anarchists simply pit *their* violence against the *State's* violence. But as Indian anarchists see it, the State (not perhaps all States but certainly the Indian State) does possess a certain legitimacy. The State is to be dispensed with, but until that day arrives it retains its legitimacy — *de facto*, of course, but also *de jure*. This implies accepting as valid the conventional distinction between 'violence' and 'force' (the legitimate violence of the State).

Vinoba certainly did so. He made a three-fold distinction between 'violent power' exercised by unauthorised individuals, the power over violence vested in the State, and 'people's power', which is based on nonviolence. Drawing on traditional Indian political thought, he appears to have accepted the typical justification of the State as an institution which was developed to suppress 'naked' or unauthorised violence. State power, he believed, was certainly not nonviolence (so a 'peaceful revolution' through the use of State power was not a nonviolent revolution), but until society evolved to the stage of freeing itself from violence, authority to use violence had to be delegated by society to its chosen representatives, namely, officers of the State. State power, he added, could be used both for furthering violence or for restricting it and thus progressing towards nonviolence.<sup>26</sup>

The third difference to be noted relates to universalism. Western anarchism has been imbued by a universalist spirit, expressed in its generally cosmopolitan outlook and implacable hostility to nationalism when allied with States or putative States. But its universalism is relatively shallow when compared with that of Indian anarchism, rooted as the latter's is in the postulate of cosmic unity that binds humans to humans, humans to animals (including cows!), both to Nature, and all things to God, the Ultimate Reality. At the level of politics, universalism is related to 'populism' in the sense of an ideology centred on 'the people', rather than classes. Some forms of Western anarchism, notably anarcho-syndicalism, have accepted much of the Marxian analysis of class in capitalist society. But generally, although Western anarchists use the language of class, their appeal is directed towards broad categories of people — the workers, the peasants, the poor, the powerless, the oppressed. Together, these constitute 'the people' who are to be liberated. 'The people' constitute the vast majority, but not everybody: the rich, the idlers, the powerful, the oppressors are excluded. The universalism of Western anarchism is consequently limited.

As interpreted by Vinoba, however, Indian anarchism is consistently universalistic. 'Sarvodaya' means 'the welfare of *all*', not just the majority. 'The people', therefore, includes everybody, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, the oppressors and the oppressed: *all*, down to or up to the last person are to be liberated; and *all* are called on to join in the process of collective liberation. Included, of course, are those who presently exercise the power of the State. They, too, are expected to co-operate with others in creating the conditions which will bring about the State's eventual demise! And, further, the social movement which seeks to direct society towards the goal of a stateless society should co-operate with the government, and the government with it — although, naturally, the movement's workers are not expected to co-operate with government plans and projects that militate against the goal.<sup>27</sup>

It is important to appreciate that Vinoba's *anarchism* was involved in his disapproval or, as he might have put it, non-approval, of the line taken by JP and the majority of Sarvodaya workers in 1974 and afterwards. This may not be obvious for two reasons. One is that as JP's movement for Total Revolution developed, public opinion polarised and Vinoba found himself in a position in which he could be seen as on Mrs Gandhi's side. Polarisation has that kind of effect: willy-nilly people are compelled to take sides; and even if they try not to do so, they cannot because one side or the other will place them in the opponent's camp — the he-who-is-not-with-us-is-against-us syndrome.

The other reason is that JP's movement appeared to be, and in some respects was, more anarchistic — by Western standards — than the Sarvodaya movement when guided by Vinoba. For one thing, JP injected into the revised strategy for nonviolent revolution the element of active struggle, reverting, so to say, to Gandhi's 'negative' or resistive Satyagraha. He came to see, as Vinoba never did, that 'consciousness' — that indispensable lever of radical social change — can be generated only by engaging in struggle. For another, JP's movement appeared to be 'anti-statist': 'people's power' was pitted against 'State power', and 'people's power', not victory for the opposition parties, was what JP insisted the Total Revolution was all about.

Furthermore, JP, perhaps recalling the Marxism of his youth, began to develop more realistic views about the State. Vinoba's theory of the State, like much anarchist theorising on the subject, is curiously abstract and static — about the State *as such*, and not connected with actual, specific, historical States. If it had been otherwise, how could he have so misread or ignored what was happening to the Indian State led by Mrs Gandhi? JP, in contrast, observing what was happening, came to see that the State in India was not, as Vinoba's theory suggested,

some kind of 'neutral' paternal power: it became 'glaringly apparent' to JP that 'the State system was subservient to a variety of forces and interests entrenched in keeping it a closed shop'.<sup>28</sup>

But Vinoba was not convinced. And he was also not impressed by the anarchistic appearance of JP's movement. He suspected that those, like JP's supporters, who ascribed all ills to the government felt that 'the government was everything to them'.<sup>29</sup> And he suspected that a movement which placed so much emphasis on the resignation of the Bihar Government and the dissolution of the Bihar Assembly would end up by replacing Tweedledum with Tweedledee. He had a shrewd idea of where 'the politicalisation of the movement' by JP would lead.

And it is significant that what really disturbed him and prompted him to embark on his year of silence, indicative of his non-approval, was JP's decision to take the movement into the electoral arena — a decision which, as it turned out, marked a fatal turning-point in the movement. At the time, Vinoba made it clear that he did not believe in democracy — rule by the many ('demonocracy', he dubbed it) but in consensus — the rule of all by all. 'The People's Front' which JP's supporters were trying to form in order to oppose the Congress and its junior ally, the Communist Party of India, would not, he observed, be a front of *all* the people. At the elections, there would be two groups, one the Government and the other the Opposition. 'Both', he said, 'will claim that the people are behind them. I don't believe in this system at all'.<sup>30</sup>

The elections did finally come, although not until 1977, after being postponed and after twenty-one months of Emergency rule. And the electorate was divided into basically two groups, as Vinoba predicted; and, to the surprise of Mrs Gandhi, the Opposition won. It called itself the Janata or People's party, and it formed a People's Government. Referring to it later, Vinoba quipped: it was a party to which people had given their votes and notes, that is, currency notes. 'That party slipped and proved useless'.<sup>31</sup> But he exaggerated. It was not quite 'useless': it did dismantle 'the Indira Raj' — Mrs Gandhi's apparatus of executive autocracy. But in its three years of office, it achieved little that was positive. So far as changing the system is concerned, as distinct from restoring the old system, it did prove 'useless'. In that sense, Vinoba who had predicted in 1974 that nothing would come out of the agitation started in Bihar and led by JP was finally proved right.

To say this is not to condone Vinoba's questionable stance either before or, especially, during the Emergency. It is also not to say that JP was wrong to have revised Vinoba's strategy of revolution, although in doing so JP made several huge mistakes which the failure of 'the Janata experiment' served only to highlight. But it is to say that the issues

which divided the Sarvodaya movement in 1974 and which are still not finally resolved are more complex than is generally supposed by protagonists on either side. If Indian anarchism as a social movement was to make progress in the early 1970s and not collapse as the campaign to implement Gramdan began to falter, it had to 'go beyond' Vinoba. JP took it 'beyond', moving it, bewilderingly, in both a *more* and a *less* anarchist direction. But, if after the set-backs and disappointments of recent years, it is to continue to make progress, it will have to 'go beyond JP'. And 'going beyond' may involve going back to *some* of Vinoba's ideas, while retaining *some* of JP's — and, of course, developing new ideas that are relevant to the present difficult situation the movement faces.

One last observation, by way of addendum. Although my own instincts and proclivities led me to side with JP when the difference between the two Sarvodaya factions emerged, I have to admit that Vinoba was probably more of an anarchist, even by Western standards, than was JP. It was fitting, therefore, that the anarchist who was dubbed 'the Saint of the Government' was spared the ultimate irony that befell JP — as it had befallen Gandhi before him. He was not accorded the 'honour' of a State funeral!<sup>32</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Vinoba Bhavé, *Democratic Values* (Kashi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1962) p. 64.
- 2 Viswanath Tandon, *Selections from Vinoba* (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1981) p. 162.
- 3 *Harijan*, 8 January 1950. *Harijan* was a journal founded by Gandhi. In its issue of 29 March 1952, it published an extract from *Freedom*, its editor explaining 'Freedom is a London weekly of the Anarchist School and to a certain extent akin to the *Harijan*.'
- 4 Tandon, op cit, p. 3.
- 5 Bhavé, *Democratic Values*, p. 192.
- 6 *Bhoodan*, 27 November 1957.
- 7 *Everyman's Weekly*, 22 June 1974.
- 8 Vinoba Bhavé, *Bhoodan Yajna* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1953) p. 93.
- 9 See G. Ostergaard & M. Currell, *The Gentle Anarchists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) pp. 201-204.
- 10 R.P. Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).
- 11 Bhavé, *Democratic Values*, pp. 13-14.
- 12 *Bhoodan*, 28 November 1956.
- 13 Vinoba, *Revolutionary Sarvodaya* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964) p. 2.
- 14 Tandon, op cit, p. 96.
- 15 *Bhoodan*, 21 November 1956.
- 16 *Bhoodan*, 12 December 1956.

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- 17 Bhave, *Democratic Values*, p. 226.
  - 18 *ibid*, pp. 29, 189.
  - 19 *ibid*, pp. 67, 71, 77-78 for this and other references in this paragraph.
  - 20 See G. Ostergaard, *Nonviolent Revolution in India* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1985) pp.232-238.
  - 21 *ibid*, p. 325.
  - 22 The speech was made at Benaras Hindu University, 6 February 1916. See M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works* (Delhi: Government of India, 1964) Vol. XIII, p. 214. Reading the speech led the young Vinoba to write to Gandhi and, then, join his ashram.
  - 23 On the religious basis, see Dennis Dalton, 'The theory of anarchism in modern India — an analysis of the political thought of Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Gandhi' in R. J. Moore (ed), *Tradition and Politics in South Asia* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1979).
  - 24 Bhave, *Democratic Values*, pp. 29, 189.
  - 25 *ibid*, p. 15.
  - 26 *Harijan*, 24 April 1949.
  - 27 The extent of the co-operation between the movement and the Government during the Bhoodan-Gramdan phase was quite considerable. It can be argued that, in those years, the movement was largely 'co-opted' by the Congress Government and used to facilitate its own programme of land reforms.
  - 28 *Everyman's Weekly*, 27 April 1975.
  - 29 *People's Action*, June 1974.
  - 30 Transcript (in Hindi) of a meeting between Vinoba and some executive members of the Sarva Seva Sangh, 12-13 December 1974.
  - 31 *Sansthakul*, January 1981.
  - 32 This paper draws on my contribution to the symposium on Vinoba, *Gandhi Marg*, 56 and 57, November-December 1983, subsequently republished in book form: R. R. Diwakar & Mahendra Agrawal (eds), *Vinoba: The Spiritual Revolutionary* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1984). For further details of Vinoba's thought in his later years see my *Nonviolent Revolution in India* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1985), which also contains a critical assessment of the rival strategies on Vinoba and JP.
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## Nicolas Walter

### Woodcock Reconsidered

George Woodcock has been one of the most active anarchist writers in the English-speaking world for nearly half a century, he is the author of two of the best-known books on anarchism currently available, and as he reaches the age of 75 his position is worth reconsidering.

Woodcock was born in Canada in 1912, but his parents were British and they brought him back to Britain within a few months. He was well educated, but his father died in 1927, and he was unable to go to university. He did clerical work for the Great Western Railway from 1929 until the beginning of the Second World War, and then worked on the land for several years. During the 1930s he took a growing part in the literary life of London as a minor poet and critic. He also took a growing part in political life, first as a socialist, then as a pacifist, and then as an anarchist. During the 1940s he made a name for himself. From 1940 to 1947 he produced sixteen issues of the little magazine *Now*. From 1941 to 1948 he was involved with the Freedom Group, writing frequently in *War Commentary* and *Freedom*, helping to edit the paper when most of the editors were imprisoned in 1945, and producing several pamphlets and the booklet *Anarchy or Chaos* (1944). After the end of the war, he ran the Freedom Defence Committee and did editorial work for the Porcupine Press, and he began to write a long series of successful books. In 1949 he and his wife returned to Canada. He worked on the land and travelled widely, taught literature and Asian studies at the universities of Washington and British Columbia, and edited *Canadian Literature* from 1959 to 1977. He became well known as an editor and critic and as an author and broadcaster, and he won many prizes and honours. He is still a very productive writer.

Woodcock's many books include several studies of people involved in or close to anarchism — Godwin, Proudhon, Kropotkin, Wilde, Huxley, Read, Orwell, Gandhi — and also a general history and anthology of anarchism. Two of his collections of essays — *The Writer and Politics* (1948) and *The Rejection of Politics* (1972) — include several items of anarchist interest. For his 65th birthday William H. New produced a collection of essays in his honour — *A Political Art* (1978) — with a bibliography of his writings. For his 70th birthday he produced an autobiography — *Letter to the Past* (1982) — going as far as

1949. He has contributed entries on anarchist topics to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and other reference books, and he is still a frequent contributor to anarchist periodicals (including this one).

For most people, however, 'Woodcock' means his two general books on anarchism, both of which have been kept in print and have recently appeared in new editions. *Anarchism* has been the most widely read book on the subject in English ever since it appeared a quarter of a century ago, and it has also been translated into several other languages. It was first published in the United States as a Meridian paperback (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing, 1962) and then in Britain as a Pelican paperback (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963). The latter edition was reprinted in 1970 and 1971; in 1975 a new impression contained a new Postscript, and this was reprinted in 1977, 1979 and 1983; in 1986 a 'second edition' appeared with a new Preface and some rearranged and new material. *The Anarchist Reader* is a companion volume, first published as a Fontana paperback (Glasgow: Collins, 1977) and as a Harvester hardback (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977). The former edition was reprinted in 1978, 1980 and 1983; in 1986 a new impression appeared 'with corrections'. *Anarchism* must have introduced more people to anarchism than any other single publication, so whatever we may think of it we owe it a great debt, and *The Anarchist Reader* is an appropriate sequel. The problem is how well they really represent anarchism, either as it has been in the past, is in the present, or should be in the future.

In reconsidering *Anarchism* it is necessary to consider both the original text, which has remained largely unchanged since 1962, and the subsequent revisions, of 1975 and of 1986. But first there are three good and three bad things to say about the book. Woodcock always writes well, though never very well, and his fluent style makes him one of the few writers on anarchism who is both pleasant to read and easy to understand; he is well informed about the subject, and gives a larger amount of information about it than may easily be found in any other single place; and for a political writer he is unusually courteous and moderate. On the other hand, he is so strongly biased towards the intellectual and against the militant aspects of anarchism that he gives an increasingly partial view of the movement; he is so reluctant to give proper references to sources and so careless about factual details that his narrative is marred by all sorts of gaps and slips; and he is foolishly and sometimes fatuously self-centred.

*Anarchism* was the first general book on the subject in English for more than half a century, and the author was both a participant in the movement and a professional writer, so it started with great advantages. Virtually all its original reviewers — including myself, in *Anarchy* 28



(June 1963) — were so much impressed by its mere existence that they didn't pay much attention to his scholarship and concentrated instead on his method and message. His subtitle was 'A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements', and this was his order of priority. Between a Prologue which tried to explain what anarchism was and an Epilogue which tried to explain what had happened to it, the history of anarchism until the end of the Spanish Civil War was divided into two parts. 'The Idea' began with a rather dismissive survey of the 'Family Tree' of anarchism, and then described Godwin, Stirner, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and Tolstoy at length. 'The Movement' began with a rather summary survey of 'International Endeavours', and then described the national movements of France, Italy, Spain and Russia at length and of North and South America and of Northern Europe (including Britain) in brief.

I criticised the original edition for its general romantic and intellectual bias, for its excessive concentration on a few individuals, and above all for the obituary tone of the Epilogue. This argued that 1939 marked 'the real death' of the anarchist movement, that the 'thousands of anarchists scattered thinly over many countries of the world', the 'anarchist groups and anarchist periodicals, anarchist schools and anarchist communities...form only the ghost of the historical anarchist movement, a ghost that inspires neither fear among governments nor hope among peoples nor even interest among newspapermen', that 'clearly, as a movement, anarchism has failed', that 'lost causes may be the best causes . . . but once lost they are never won again', but that the 'anarchist idea' or the 'anarchist ideal' lives on in some metaphysical and non-political way.

The 1975 edition was unchanged except for the addition of the new Postscript, which was dated July 1973 but was based on an article called 'Anarchism Revisited' which had been published in the American magazine *Commentary* (August 1968) and reprinted in *The Rejection of Politics* (1972). This was mainly concerned to justify his old thesis — that the anarchist movement had ceased to exist — by offering a new thesis — that the 'new' anarchism which had emerged during the 1960s was essentially different from the 'old' anarchism which had been described in the original edition and had disappeared. I criticised this double thesis at some length in *Freedom* ('Has Anarchism Changed?', 17 April, 1 May, 26 June, 10 July 1976), arguing in general that there was no radical break between the 'old' and 'new' anarchism but an essential continuity between the two, and in particular that the various points advanced by Woodcock as evidence were inaccurate or misleading or both.

The 1986 edition is changed in several ways. The new Preface, which

is dated September 1985, restates the double thesis yet again, though in a modified form, and much of the material in the 1975 Postscript has been incorporated into it, into appropriate parts of the text, and into the re-written Epilogue. Woodcock now admits that 'one can no longer validly argue that anarchism in any final sense came to an end in 1939', and he accepts 'the resurgence of anarchist ideas that has made it necessary to revise this book'. He agrees that 'a series of events . . . have made necessary this new and considerably revised edition' and that he has 'accordingly carried out a general revision and updating of the book'. But he still argues that 'anarchism has re-emerged in new forms . . . assuming new manifestations', and that these are somehow essentially different from 'the old traditional anarchism' which did come to an end in 1939. Despite the recognition that 'the idea has revived astonishingly', as shown by the worldwide spread of the symbol of the circled A, which is used on the cover of the new edition, or indeed by the very appearance of the new edition, he repeats as many of his previous denials of the continuity of the revived and the traditional anarchism as he can, simultaneously exaggerating the rigidity of 'old' anarchism and the flexibility of 'new' anarchism and the gap between the two. He still insists that 'what was happening in the 1960s was not a knock in the coffin of the past', that 'the anarchists of the 1960s were not the historic anarchist movement resurrected' but 'something quite different', that 'what we have seen in the last quarter of a century on an almost worldwide scale has not been the revival of the historic anarchist movement, with its martyrology and its passwords all complete' but again 'something quite different' — 'an autonomous revival of the anarchist idea', going 'beyond the remnants of the old anarchist organisations' and 'creating new types of movements, new modes of radical action'.

I must say that I find most of this argument pure fantasy, rapidly dispelled by reading the relevant material, listening to the appropriate witnesses, or simply by living through much of the period in question. It is surely significant that 'the most originitive of recent anarchist writers' mentioned by Woodcock — Colin Ward, Paul Goodman, and Murray Bookchin — emerged from traditional libertarian politics and worked out their ideas in organisations and periodicals belonging recognisably to the 'old' anarchism of the 1940s and 1950s, and indeed that much of what they said was foreshadowed long before then by such figures of the historical movement as Gustav Landauer, Errico Malatesta, and indeed Peter Kropotkin.

However, I don't want to repeat all my detailed arguments against his argument; I am more interested in considering the revised edition of the book as a whole. But I am diverted by one particular aspect of the book,

which is Woodcock's treatment of his own part in the movement. As he says at the end of the new Preface, 'I am no longer the sympathetic though objective observer looking from the present into a past in which I had no part. I did play a role in the anarchist movement during the 1940s, which means that in the book as revised I appear as an actor, if only a minor one, and that at times an element of subjectivity enters in, since I am looking at events in which I was involved and to which I reacted personally.' This hardly prepares the reader for what follows.

In the original edition, he ended his account of the British movement in 1939, at 'the beginning of a period, beyond the chronological scope of the present volume, when anarchism became for a time part of the British literary landscape', with the comment: 'But the description of that period belongs to another and more personal narrative.' In the 1975 edition the Postscript gave some hints of such a narrative: 'During World War II, rather unexpectedly, it was in the English-speaking countries that anarchism demonstrated the greatest vitality in the sense of interpreting the tradition in new ways. . . . Britain became for a period the real centre of seminal anarchist thought. Kropotkin's old paper, *Freedom*, was revived, and the present writer, who was one of its editors, also founded a literary review, *Now*, to which many British, American and refugee French and Belgian writers sympathetic to anarchism contributed. . . .' Other versions appeared in Woodcock's books on Orwell and Read, both emphasising his personal acquaintance with such figures as well as his political activity in the anarchist movement. The full version appeared in his autobiography, which reasonably emphasised his own life but unreasonably over-emphasised his importance in the anarchist movement and also perpetrated a remarkably large number of factual errors. This pattern was continued in several articles, especially another personal narrative in the *New York Review of Books* on 27 September 1984.

In the 1986 edition of *Anarchism* the egocentric bias is so embarrassing as to become endearing. In the account of the British anarchist movement, *Now* is given an absurd amount of attention and praise. It gets more space than any other paper from the 1930s to the 1950s, and Woodcock even bothers to quote Julian Symons' ludicrously favourable comparison with *Horizon*. But the height of absurdity follows: 'The 1950s was a period of somnolence for anarchism in Britain. The movement lost two of its leading figures in 1949 when Marie Louise Berneri died and George Woodcock departed. . . .' The death of the former was certainly a political as well as a personal tragedy, but the departure of the latter was scarcely noticed. Elsewhere he repeats that 'the 1950s' was 'a period of hibernation for anarchist ideas' everywhere. Well, perhaps this was true for him, but it wasn't for

those he left behind him, and here the element of subjectivity distorts his account of what happened then and later.

No doubt there was a decline after the end of the war, but it shouldn't be exaggerated. The Freedom Group got on as well without Woodcock during the 1950s as with him during the 1940s. It is not true that *Freedom* declined or that 'the flow of pamphlets and books from Freedom Press that had been characteristic of the war years dried up'. In 1951 *Freedom* became a weekly and began to produce annual volumes of selected articles. The Freedom Press produced more pamphlets and also some books — notably Vernon Richards' *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution* (1953) and the first English translation of Voline's *Unknown Revolution* (1954-1955). Members of the group produced *The Syndicalist* from 1952 to 1953 and organised the Malatesta Club from 1954 to 1958, and anarchists and syndicalists had regular open-air speakers. It may not be surprising that Woodcock should depreciate the syndicalists, following the bitter split of 1944, but he might have mentioned that the Anarchist Federation of Britain became the Syndicalist Workers Federation in 1950 (not 1954), that its paper continued as *Direct Action* from 1945 to 1959, as *World Labour News* from 1960 to 1962, and again as *Direct Action* from 1963 to 1968, and that although he says that the Syndicalist Workers Federation 'appears to have expired' in 1968 it soon revived and subsequently reappeared as the Anarchist Syndicalist Alliance and then in 1979 as the Direct Action Movement, which still exists as the British section of the International Workers Association (whose change of name from the International Working Men's Association Woodcock hasn't noticed), and which publishes a revived *Direct Action*.

It is surely surprising that Woodcock doesn't even mention the papers produced by Albert McCarthy during the 1940s and 1950s, which paralleled his own work, the *Delphic Review* of 1949-1950 being the explicit successor of *Now* (and he was a contributor to both issues, so he should know). He does mention the *University Libertarian*, but only as one of the 'lesser sheets with their limited constituencies' which are later compared unfavourably with *Anarchy*. But the *University Libertarian* was a predecessor rather than a contemporary of *Anarchy*, appearing from 1955 to 1960 (again he was a frequent contributor, so he should know), and indeed its end was one of the factors leading directly to the beginning of *Anarchy*. But Woodcock seems to have been mentally as well as physically remote from the anarchist movement and the left in general during this crucial period. He doesn't mention the crisis of the Communist Party following Khrushchov's secret speech early in 1956 or the double crisis of Suez and Hungary later in 1956, or the consequent emergence of the New Left, with its various papers and

clubs, which opened the Marxist and Labourist left to libertarian influence during the late 1950s. Nor does he realise that the significant developments in the nuclear disarmament movement also occurred during the 1950s, culminating in rather than commencing with the formation of the Committee of 100 in 1960. It is symbolic that he mentions the International Anarchist Congresses of 1946 and 1968, but not the one of 1958, which was held at the Malatesta Club in London.

After exaggerating the decline of the 1950s, of course, Woodcock exaggerates the revival of the 1960s. 'But in the 1960s everything changed,' he announces dramatically. 'The crucial decade was the 1960s,' he repeats. However, he has some trouble with the sequence of events. 'First there was a scholarly interest,' he claims; but, however much one may appreciate the books on anarchism which appeared from the 1950s, including his own, they surely followed rather than led events in the real world outside. 'The first notable event of the renaissance that now began,' he then says of Britain during the 1960s, 'was the foundation of *Anarchy*'; but again, however much one may appreciate the *Anarchy* of 1961-1970 (and those of us who were involved in it are inclined to look at it more indulgently now than we did then), even the best periodical, too, only reflects outside events. *Anarchy* is overpraised as much as *Now*, and its true nature and significance are equally distorted, leading to a distortion of the account of the British anarchist movement during and after the 1970s.

Woodcock has removed most of the nonsense about the peace movement which disfigured his 1975 Postscript, but one piece of nonsense has survived in the new Preface. Discussing the anarchist revival after the 1950s, he says that 'the earliest clear signs began to emerge in the very year the first edition of *Anarchism* was published in Britain. . . . I remember in 1963 reading with astonishment a report from London of a contingent five hundred strong marching twenty abreast behind the black banner of the London anarchists in one of the street demonstrations of that year.' Those who were present on the last day of the glorious Easter March in April 1963 will remember that demonstration in the West End, but the banner of the Federation of London Anarchists (which had been taken on such events for several years, as had that of the London Anarchist Group before) was only one of many in an occasion which was led not by anarchists but by the Committee of 100, and the press reports were more than usually imaginative. Woodcock quotes the report further: 'The London anarchists came ringleted and bearded and pre-Raphaelite. . . . It was a frieze of non-conformists enviable in their youth and gaiety and personal freedom.' If he had read the first-hand reports in *Freedom* (20 April 1963), he would know that this one was wild exaggeration.

Ironically, a photograph of the demonstration decorated the front cover of the issue of *Anarchy* containing the review of his book announcing the death of the anarchist movement 24 years earlier!

Similarly, he again refers to the *Freedom* readership survey to support his arguments about the difference between the 'old' and the 'new' anarchism, still not realising that it destroys them. He dates it vaguely 'during the 1960s', but it was actually conducted at the beginning of 1960, the detailed results being discussed in *Freedom* from January to July 1960 — at the very time he was writing the original version of his book. He presumably didn't notice it until it was summarised in *Anarchy* 12 (February 1962) — too late to be used in the book. The point is that its picture of the anarchist movement directly contradicts his whole thesis, for here were the old anarchists of the historical movement alive and kicking at the time when they were meant to have left the stage, and moreover showing all the qualities which he still supposes to be characteristic of the new anarchists of the revived movement.

When Woodcock does at last get to the revived movement, he gives a very distant view of it. His references to the movements for nuclear disarmament and sexual liberation, to the students and blacks, to the Situationists and the Greens, are transparently ill-informed. In his account of Britain he mentions *Ludd* (1966) and *Black Flag*, merely to compare them unfavourably with *Anarchy*, and a few local papers, but he doesn't even mention Albert Meltzer and Stuart Christie, Ted Kavanagh and Wynford Hicks, or the various other papers they have produced — *Cuddon's Cosmopolitan Review* (1965-1967) and the *Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review* (1976-1982), *Inside Story* (1972-1974) and *Wildcat* (1974-1975), and so on. Nor is he aware of the strongly libertarian papers outside the anarchist movement, such as *Solidarity* (since 1961) and *Resistance* (1963-1968), or the strongly libertarian tendencies of the much broader counter-culture or underground. And, despite his interest in the artistic manifestations of anarchism, there is no reference to the work of Cliff Harper, which will live long after most of what the rest of us have done during the 1970s and 1980s has been forgotten.

I have concentrated on the British movement because I have known it for 30 years, but the same problems arise with Woodcock's view of other national movements. His accounts of the fall and rise of anarchism in particular countries as well as in the world in general seem very narrow and partial and give an increasingly misleading impression of the current movement. So the verdict on the new material in the 1986 edition of *Anarchism* may be that it is better than in the 1975 edition but must be that it isn't good enough for such a book.

Turning from the new material to the old, the strange thing is how little the original text has actually been revised in the light of all the errors which inevitably crept into such an ambitious work of synthesis in the first place or of all the work which has been done on the subject during the subsequent 25 years. One special puzzle is that many errors and omissions could have been repaired by reference to the work of Max Nettlau from the 1890s to the 1930s, but although Woodcock has included some of his books in the bibliography he doesn't seem to have used them much. Indeed the bibliography is now a curious document, both for what it excludes and for what it includes, for what should be there but isn't and for what is there but hasn't been used; it somehow seems appropriate that the bibliography of Woodcock's own writings in *A Political Art* is so incomplete and inaccurate!

It would take a whole book to explain all my disagreements with this one, but it is worth listing some obvious points. There is no recognition of the later work done by historians of medieval millennialism or the radical Reformation. Woodcock's account of Gerrard Winstanley has been made obsolete by recent research; the 1973 edition of Christopher Hill's *Winstanley* is in the bibliography, but not the 1983 edition which summarises the new discoveries refuting Woodcock's statement that 'Winstanley retreated into an obscurity so dense that even the place and date of his death are unknown', in the light of which we now know much about his private and public life after his retirement from politics and also that he died in London in 1676. There is no recognition of the later work done by historians of the English, American and French revolutions. No reference is made to Edmund Burke's ironical but influential *Vindication of Natural Society* (1756), one of the earliest libertarian texts which was at all widely read.

No account is taken of Godwin's early political writings, which have now been identified and reprinted. The belated recognition of Godwin as a forerunner of anarchism is still attributed to Kropotkin, when it was clearly due to Nettlau in his writings from 1890 onwards. The account of Stirner is spoilt by the survival of errors in the German and in the narrative; thus Stirner's name comes from *Stirn*, not *Stirne*, *The Ego and His Own* was published in 1844, not 1845, and it didn't disappear for 50 years but was reprinted in 1882. Woodcock still says that Proudhon's 'single reference' to Godwin as a communist 'suggests that he was not familiar with his work'; this suggests that Woodcock is not familiar with Proudhon's work, for there is another reference to Godwin as an anarchist in his *Carnets* for 1850, first published in 1968. The Spanish paper *El Porvenir* (1845) is still said to have 'a fair title to be regarded as the first of all anarchist journals', despite the previous appearance of the *Berliner Monatsschrift* (1844) and *L'Humanitaire*

(1841), both identified as anarchist papers by Nettlau nearly a century ago. The word *libertaire* is still said to have been first used as a synonym for *anarchist* by Déjacque in 1858; in fact it was a year earlier, in his pamphlet *De l'Etre-Humain mâle et femelle* (1857).

Woodcock's account of Bakunin has been outdated by much recent work, especially the appearance of the Archives Bakounine from 1961. For example, in his discussion of the authorship of the *Catechism of the Revolutionary* (wrongly called the *Revolutionary Catechism*), he says that 'the lack of direct evidence makes it impossible even now to solve the problem'; but the publication of Bakunin's letter to Nechaev of June 1870 several times from 1966 onwards has provided direct evidence for a probable solution. Woodcock's account of Kropotkin exaggerates his 'extraordinary mildness of nature and outlook'; he could be pretty ferocious at times. The account of his life in Britain plays down his early involvement in militant anarchism, through ignorance of the full extent of his writing and speaking activity during his first decade here. Similarly the account of his later life wrongly ends his 'major contributions to anarchist theory' with *Mutual Aid* (1902) and *The State* (wrongly dated 1903 rather than 1897), through ignorance of the essays collected in *La Science moderne et l'anarchie* (1913) and other late writings.

Woodcock's accounts of such episodes as the framing of the Chicago Martyrs or of Sacco and Vanzetti are now badly out of date. Similarly the accounts of the Mexican and Russian and Spanish revolutions have inevitably been superseded by the large amount of work done since 1962. Paul Avrich's book on the Russian anarchists is an obvious case, and many aspects of the Spanish movement have been altered out of recognition. Thus Woodcock's summary of the Casas Viejas rising of 1933 is completely contradicted by Jerome R. Mintz's book of 1982, which he includes in his bibliography but hasn't used at all. Similarly Woodcock says that 'the full history of anarchist industrial and agricultural collectivisation in Spain has never been written', but he doesn't mention any of the more recent contributions to this task, such as Frank Mintz's book *L'autogestion dans l'Espagne révolutionnaire* (1970, 1976).

One of the serious defects of the book is its continuing concentration on a few European countries at the expense of the rest of the world. The chapter on 'Various Traditions' disposes of Latin America in a couple of pages, then covers Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Britain, and the United States in rapid succession. There is still no reference at all to the various lively movements in — say — Australia, China, Japan, or India (the account of the Gandhian movement in the 1975 Postscript



has been dropped). The new material really adds little to the original picture and does little to alter the book's bias.

There are all sorts of other mistakes and misunderstandings in the accounts of the various national movements, but I shall mention only some of those concerning Britain. The International Congress of 1881 is still said to have met in Charrington Street (it was Cardington Street). Most's paper is still called *Die Freiheit* (rather than just *Freiheit*) and described as 'the first anarchist paper published in England' (it wasn't yet really anarchist), and he is still said to have been sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment (it was 16 months). The Labour Emancipation League is still called 'the earliest anarchist organisation in Britain' (it advocated revolutionary but still parliamentary socialism). Joseph Lane is still described as 'an elderly carter' (when he was in his 30s). Charlotte Wilson is still described as 'a Girton girl' (when she went to Newnham and was also in her 30s). The English Anarchist Circle is described as 'a small group of neo-Proudhonians' (they were almost all Kropotkinians). Wilde is given more space than any other individual (even Woodcock). Nothing is said about any of the papers published by other groups than the Freedom Press between the 1890s and the 1950s (not even the rival *Freedom* of 1930-1936), and nothing is said about Guy Aldred. *War Commentary* is said to have become *Freedom* in May 1945 rather than August 1945 (Woodcock was there, so he should know).

So *Anarchism* remains as much of a curate's egg as ever, good in parts but bad in other parts. It is true that people who don't make mistakes don't make anything, and it is often said that mistakes don't matter anyway; but it is surely at least regrettable that a major historical work should be so open to objection on purely factual grounds. If one can't trust an author's scholarship in some things, how can one do so in others? And if one can't rely on a political historian's scholarship, how can one rely on his judgement, let alone his message? All I can say is that the more I read this book the less I think of it.

*The Anarchist Reader* is much less problematic. It is one of the best anthologies of anarchist writings in English, though not nearly as good as Daniel Guérin's *Ni dieu ni maître* (1966, 1969, 1970). It contains more than 300 pages of more than 60 extracts from more than 30 authors, mostly anarchists but occasionally sympathetic outsiders (Morris and Wilde, Orwell and Bourne), with the same intellectual bias but otherwise a fair balance. (I should mention that the contributors include both Woodcock and myself.) As well as biographical and bibliographical notes, there is a long historical introduction, which repeats many of Woodcock's now familiar mistakes and misunderstandings.

The 1986 impression is a slightly enlarged but nearly unchanged reproduction of the original text of 1977. The 'corrections' consist almost entirely of additions to the notes on contributors. Several glaring errors — such as 'Bueneventura Durutti' in the table of contents — have been left untouched, and several more have been introduced into the new material. Thus we are now told that 'nothing is known of Arshinov's later fate', though we now know that he was arrested and shot in Russia in 1937, and I am credited with editing a non-existent paper! The bibliographical note has been slightly revised, but is already seriously out of date.

So the new edition of *The Anarchist Reader* is an all too appropriate companion volume to the new edition of *Anarchism*. But together the two books remain the best introduction to anarchism we have in the English-speaking world — which possibly says more against us than against George Woodcock.

*Anarchism* by George Woodcock (Penguin, £5.95).

*The Anarchist Reader* edited by George Woodcock (Fontana, £4.95).

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## Review

*Denis Pym*

### Mumford, Technique and Civilisation

The publication of part of Lewis Mumford's classic book, *Technics and Civilization*<sup>1</sup> makes available a work which, although written in the early 1930s, has keen relevance for the circumstances we face today.

Mumford's writing combines an infectious optimism about the future with a rare grasp of both technology and history — a vision shared only by Marshall McLuhan in our time. Many arguments and proposals of the Greens, Humanists and Anarchists are woven into this spirited statement in pursuit of a more organic civilisation.

#### Problems

The central issue, from an organic perspective, is represented in elegant repetition as in this example: 'We must directly see, feel, touch, manipulate, sing, dance and communicate before we can gain from the machine any further sustenance of life. If we are empty to begin with the machine only leaves us emptier; if we are passive and powerless the machine only leaves us more feeble.' And Mumford was writing in this vein more than half a century ago. Don't be confused by his use of the word *machine*. Take it in its generic sense to embrace tools, techniques, systems and the whole range of artifacts which we believe enable us to do things we are constrained to do without them.

The prospect of a more organic way of life has lost ground to the abstract and mechanical for much of the past 50 years (as Mumford warned it might). The mine and move (or what we call the 'rip-off') mentality now dominates the commitment to stay and cultivate. Man the artist and rule-maker has been squashed and squeezed out by man the machine and rule-follower. Our artifacts are used as replacements for ourselves rather than as extensions of our muscles, senses and brains — as even a cursory examination of our relations with car, computer, television, employment and the state shows. We have allowed the

corporate system and our economic roles in it to invade every aspect of our lives. We have spurned the emancipatory promises Mumford saw in the neo-technical civilisation. Instead we have extended the age of iron, coal, concrete and corporation and the power of the central and mechanical into an authoritative present these need not have. Because, as Marshall McLuhan observed and perhaps Mumford did not, electronics the gentle giant does not dictate how we should use it. Through the state and its corporations and with our passive collusion as pupil, employee and pensioner, capitalism has captured electronics for its own ends. Faced with the prospects of the free-range, man the battery-hen holds firmly to the cage. Social inertia through technical change is the reality of modern life. As Mumford rightly observes, changes in our thinking are of little moment unless accompanied by changes in personal habits and social institutions.

We have spurned risky and exciting liberation for life-styles based on safe, trivial and debilitating jobs. Man the employee, consumer and poseur, with the wanker as hero, has triumphed in a plethora of display, packaging and deception which characterises a life dominated by the public and persona. Meanwhile the authentic, the arts, play, and the everyday in which 'the machine can only exist to deepen our functions and intentions' are banished to private backwaters. Man may still seem to be the measure of all things, but bureaucracy, alphabet, clock and programmed machine have the measure of man — maybe less the measure of women!

In Mumford's 1930s view, 'capitalism, along with war, which played a major part in the development of technics, now remains with war as the chief obstacle to its further improvement'. Well, the war came and many after it, and the chief obstacle to his neo-technical civilisation still lies in our continuing celebration of 'the association of taste and fashion with waste and profiteering'. Indeed the corporate world of the 1980s is preparing us for a life dominated entirely by greed and the quest for profit. This mentality has secured a powerful hold in government, education, welfare and the whole range of our cultural activities. Today's heroes — the Boesky's, Hansons, Greens, Murdochs, Halperns, Elliots and Holmes à Courts — are on their pedestals because of their ruthless commitment to the dictum: profit is all.

### **Prospects**

The final section of Mumford's book, entitled 'Orientations', is the most important. It outlines the emerging elements of the neo-technical phase of civilisation. Again he reminds us of what has gone wrong.

Thanks to capitalism, 'the machine has been over-worked, over-enlarged and over-exploited because of the possibility of making money out of it'. Yet capitalism 'can't survive without the state subduing and regimenting its citizens and without state subsidies, privileges and tariffs'. So we inherit an authority of technique based upon perversions in the interests of pecuniary economy.

Like Thorstein Veblen before him, Mumford believes the collapse of our palaeotechnical age begins with the growing conflict between technique and capital. But the integrative and self-regulating features of the automatic system require our energies and influences if these are to crowd out the subdividing and externally controlled mechanical device which state capitalism and state communism so cleverly exploit.

In this prospect the dominant economy we know gives way to what Mumford calls 'social energetics', the reuniting of social and economic life. Creation and conversation, the utilisation of environment as a source of energy, are added to production, distribution and consumption which characterise the industrial system. Mumford stirs the reader's emotions with a series of slogans — increase conversion, economise production, normalise consumption, socialise creation. He also fleshes out his slogans with examples to show us what he means. Economise production, for example, is not a repeat of the Taylorian quest for efficiency by passing the costs on to the poor and politically weak, but derives from a unitary perspective requiring us to make the machine do what we want; stimulate inventiveness and get rid of nonsensical jobs. Mumford is for economic regionalism to help reduce the bad effects of specialisation; and for the pursuit of basic communism through a social wage because the heritage of the community belongs equally to all and a global science which includes spectator and experimenter in its stories.

Political control is to be more diffuse; transferred from the economic to the social order at large. Trade unions would take to themselves more of the responsibilities now assumed by managers. Ownership and employment go without much consideration, though a social wage would mark the end of the myth of universal employment and the convention of people as servants and rule-followers. Here Mumford rather runs out of steam. The flowering of the organic life-style is not just retarded by The System. We lack, too, sufficient illustrations and examples of what it might look like at the level of personal experience. The task of reuniting mind and body, subject and object, fantasy and reality, and the very idea of significant thinking being grounded in practice is a tall order for people whose non-visual sense and general resourcefulness are in a parlous state. How can we contemplate a slowing of the tempo of life when this experience is equated with old

age and approaching death — still one of our biggest taboos? How can we, now so dependent on our artifacts, possibly acknowledge them as counterfeits of the natural?

Remember Mumford is a master of the word, not the sword or the hammer and sickle, so when it comes to the realisation of the organic ideology he puts his confidence in the new professionals — architects, social workers, community planners, and the like. We know his confidence was misplaced. The new professionals have done much to bolster the state, corporation and self-worth. Their failure was ensured when they (we) forfeited autonomy in the act of becoming employees and, thanks to their education, over-valued the abstract and discounted the practical. In this process they lost, too, the modifying influence of the ideals of service and excellence in task. The disillusioned professional turned away from the petty tasks of his employment to the glittering prizes of management. He embraced 'the absurdity of the bourgeoisie's overwhelming concern for power, success and comfort and the passive acceptance of all the new products of the machine'.

As I have asserted, a literary-based or 3Rs education gives us a predisposition for abstracting experience from context and the maintenance of all those dualisms, particularly the split between mind and body, which render us incapable of embracing a more organic existence. It is the exceptions to this rule who should interest us. Most are women and people who live private lives, but I'll stick with the male, public domain for illustrations.

In one of the best books on our relationships with our artifacts, Robert Pirsig (*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*) tells his own story of one man putting mind and body together to change his relationship with technique and environment. My exemplar is the founding father of our literary philosophical tradition. I'm not referring to the Socrates Plato presents for his own purposes but the Socrates who must have impressed Plato, for he was everything Plato was not.

We know about Socrates via Plato for his inductive argument. The Athenians of the day were, like us, obsessed with technique. Socrates used dialogue to reveal the ignorance of Athens' know-alls and smart farts. Socrates didn't mind being described as the wisest man in Athens because he reckoned he was the only person who knew how ignorant he was.

Today we live in a so-called Information Society, one in which people who 'don't know' are made to feel inferior and inadequate. In such a milieu ignorance is inadmissible, so covering up, pretending and deceiving characterise much of public life. The AIDS advert sums it all up — 'Don't die of ignorance'. Apart from some skills in diagnosing AIDS and counting the heads who have it, we know precious little that

matters about this plague. But life is a mystery. We are born and die in ignorance. That slogan is highly political, designed to put the fear of God into us. Remember, Socrates believed we could only learn by acknowledging our ignorance.

He saw himself as a sterile midwife whose job it was to extract The Good from within his pupils and acquaintances. Little wonder he was so loved by those close to him. He believed The Good mattered more than the truth; that focussing on The Good would lead people to search for commonalities rather than differences. Furthermore, The Good lay within the person and not in his persona or artifacts which Socrates counted for naught.

None of the foregoing need surprise us if we remember that Socrates represented the oral (or organic) tradition — he claimed his ideas came to him from voices in his head. He probably did not write at all. He certainly did not believe that writing offers a purchase on immortality, as fearful Plato undoubtedly did.

This leads us to a third significant aspect of Socrates' own personal and practical philosophy. He believed that death, like life, is to be valued. When offered the chance to escape from Athens and his own death, he refused, reminding his friends that a philosopher's life is a preparation for death.

I have moved away from Mumford purposefully. As a writer his skill is in diagnosing the problem and proffering ideas rather than in making things happen. For that, like Socrates and Pirsig, we must turn inward to the private and personal and to what we most deeply share with others as fallible, mortal souls. We must do this in order to contemplate and act upon the *ignorance* fashioning our obsession with knowing, the *inadequacy* preoccupying us with success and the *uncertainty* which leads us to embrace the organised chaos of contemporary life. The idea of technique providing knowledge, success and order, on the way to immortality and infallibility, is an illusion we ought to be able to live without. Mumford's neo-technical society demands no less.

1 Lewis Mumford: *The Future of Technics and Civilization*. Introduction by Colin Ward. Freedom Press, 1986, paperback, £3.50.

## Review

**George Woodcock**

### **The American Individualists**

*Benjamin R. Tucker & the Champions of Liberty*

Edited by Michael E. Coughlin, Charles H. Hamilton and Mark A. Sullivan

Published by Michael E. Coughlin, St. Paul, Minnesota, \$15 cloth, \$7.95 paper

It is often forgotten that, after William Godwin and his immediate followers had passed in temporary obscurity after Godwin's death in 1836, the first English-speaking anarchists emerged in the United States. Benjamin Tucker's *Liberty*, founded in 1881, antedated both of the early English anarchist periodicals (*Freedom* by five years and *The Anarchist* by four years), and Tucker himself was part of a movement that extended back to the 1830s when Josiah Warren started his journal, *The Peaceful Revolutionist*, and embarked on the first of his several experiments in free community living, the Village of Equity.

By the sheer persistence with which he propagated his particular kind of individualist anarchism, Benjamin Tucker became the best known of the American-born anarchists. His contacts extended far beyond anarchist circles, for Bernard Shaw often contributed to *Liberty*, and unattached homegrown radicals like H.L. Mencken and Walt Whitman were among Tucker's admirers. He stood apart from the more celebrated immigrant anarchist movement represented by Johann Most, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, though in 1886 he came out strongly in defence of the Chicago anarchists. Indeed, even if he maintained consistently his position of individualist anarchism, Tucker was by no means insular in his attitudes. He did the first translation into English of Bakunin's *God and the State*, and he devoted much space in *Liberty* to the defence of Kropotkin at the time of his trial in Lyon in 1883. But Johann Most's advocacy of violence tended to alienate him from the immigrant anarchists in the United



States and in the end from the anarchist communist trend in general.

Tucker was a good editor and a fearless critic of the pretences and hypocrisies of American society in his time, so that even today back issues of *Liberty* often make interesting reading, but he was never a particularly original thinker. He derived most of his ideas from Josiah Warren and from Proudhon, and did not add a great deal to them. If anything, he tended to remove their arguments from the context of practical activity which Warren had tried to sustain in his communities and Time Stores and Proudhon in his People's Bank, and reading Tucker today one is impressed most of all by his talents as a polemical journalist, popularising individualist ideas and through *Liberty* offering a forum in which this current of radical thinking could find expression in its considerable variety.

Tucker, indeed, was perhaps most important for his steady encouragement of libertarian thought in late nineteenth-century English-speaking America, and *Liberty* in its quarter of a century of existence became the leading journal of its time that gave expression to the various representatives of that trend. This is why it is so appropriate that the editors of *Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of 'Liberty'* should have avoided concentrating on Tucker alone, but should have also explored his links with the writers whose ideas overlapped with his own, like Henry George, Lysander Spooner, William B. Greene, Ezra Heywood and Bernard Shaw, as well as the English individualists like Henry Seymour and Auberon Herbert with whom he was also in contact. The sub-title of the book, 'A Centenary Anthology', strikes one at first as curious, and one wonders what year is being celebrated in a volume published in 1986, since *Liberty* began in 1881, came to an end in 1907, and Tucker died in 1939; the effect, whether intended or not, is a gentle mockery of the whole idea of celebrating the past at special times and neglecting it at others.

Inevitably Tucker is the central figure of the book, appearing in all the essays, but, as in life, he remains the catalytic critic rather than the creative thinker, and what emerges is a collective picture of an interesting period in political discussion though not in political action or even in the consideration of action. For American individualism became steadily less practical after Warren's communal experiments, intent on defending liberties rather than using them creatively, and Tucker and his associates are perhaps most important, seen in perspective, as critics of American revolutionary traditions rather than as the harbingers of a constructive social approach related to the realities of a rapidly changing industrial society.

The essays vary much in quality and interest. Some tend to be exercises in amateur pedantry, though even these draw out of obscurity

some interesting forgotten facts. But others have a genuine historical or critical perspective or bring alive interesting figures from the past. I would especially mention Charles Hamilton's introductory essay, 'The Evolution of a Subversive Tradition', Martin Blatt's piece on Tucker and Ezra Heywood, S.E. Parker's on Tucker and Dora Marsden, William Reichert's 'Benjamin R. Tucker on Free Thought and Good Citizenship' and Carl Watner's account of the English individualists and their connection with *Liberty*.

For anyone studying late turn-of-the-century radicalism in either the United States or Britain, this will be an interesting and in some ways a useful volume, though it is material for history rather than history itself.

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#### Correction

In Nicolas Walter's article on Guy A. Aldred, it should be noted that the *New Freewoman* was published in 1913 (not 1912) and *Rex v. Aldred* was published in 1948 (not 1949) — see pages 83 and 91.